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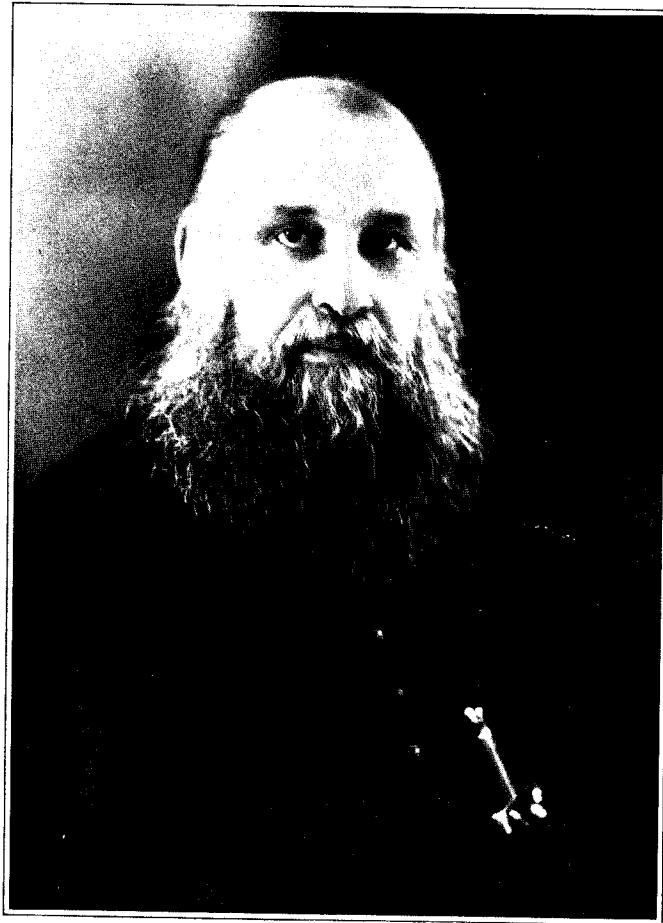
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# **FIFTY YEARS IN WESTERN CANADA**

**THE ABRIDGED MEMOIRS OF  
FATHER A. G. MORICE, O.M.I.**



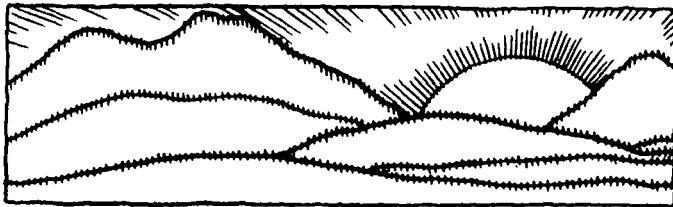




FATHER MORICE, *at. 70*

50  
ME.

# FIFTY YEARS IN WESTERN CANADA



*being the*  
ABRIDGED MEMOIRS  
of REV. A. G. MORICE O.M.I.

BY D.L.S.



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## PREFACE

EVER since the Ryerson Press published (1928) the booklet on Father Morice, from the pen of Dr. Thomas O'Hagan, it has been requested that something fuller, illustrative of the various activities of that versatile character, be issued as soon as convenient. Dr. O'Hagan's little biography considers its subject almost exclusively from the standpoint of the missionary, while, in many quarters, the latter is better known as a writer and scientist.

The periodical publication of the Canadian North-West Historical Society, of Battleford, has the following on the same: "Students of history should receive his works as most authoritative, especially his studies of the Indian language. It is an important duty, after spending forty-eight years as missionary among the Skeena District Indians, now to write his reminiscences."

On the other hand, after reading Dr. O'Hagan's "Father Morice," that greatest of authorities on the North Pacific coast history, Judge F. W. Howay, of New Westminster, wrote to the subject of the pamphlet in March, 1928: "I have enjoyed it very much, but would have preferred one more full. Of course, I understand that it is only a little reader. I hope, however, that you will see that a complete biography is prepared. Your great work in history and ethnology calls for such a work."

To quote but one more author, M. F. X. Chouinard, editor of the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Québec*, had written only a few weeks before: "This remarkable production does you justice, save that it

would be good to have an additional chapter on your admirable writings. I am pleased to see that the English so well appreciate the missionary work of a Catholic Frenchman, but hope that we shall have something more complete about him."

Quebec, Battleford, and New Westminster, that means that the East, the Centre and the West, practically the whole of Canada, is represented in the expression of this desideratum. On the occasion of the golden jubilee<sup>1</sup> of a man who has deserved well of this country, we have deemed it advisable to comply with this request of Canadians and others who know a little, but want to know more, of his work in the West.

There is another consideration which prompted the publication of the present volume. Father Morice's first book, *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*, related his missionary experiences down to 1896. But much of his multifarious work, his arduous explorations, his writing and lecturing, is posterior to that date, and it has always been his intention to give, in a counterpart volume, some of the anecdotes and adventures consequent on his later missionary and exploratory journeys. Most of these have been embodied in the present Memoirs. It will save him the trouble of writing the contemplated book, and, we fondly hope, will proportionately enhance the interest of ours.

These, his Memoirs, are appropriately termed "abridged." Very much more might have been written of his career; but he is himself averse to having a pretentious volume thereon. Such as it is, we hope this will do no harm to the reader; at the same time, it may suffice to give the subject of the following pages the meed of justice to which he is entitled.

D. L. S.

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<sup>1</sup>July 26th, 1930, 50th anniversary of Father Morice's arrival in Western Canada.

# **PREPARATION**



# Fifty Years in Western Canada

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## CHAPTER I PREPARATION [1859-1882]

HE WHO is to be the subject of the present volume is a Frenchman with an English name, and apparently a man of ultimately English descent. His name is as common in England as it is rare in France. That is, no doubt, why, when he published his book on the Northern Interior of British Columbia, on which his fame rests with many people, a namesake of his, a wealthy merchant in New York who attributed much importance to family lore and genealogical trees, wrote him to enquire from which shire or county of England he came. The enquirer was at first rather nonplussed when told that the author of that work had been born in France. His surprise, however, turned to that satisfaction which is the reward of a searcher who finds what corroborates his surmise when, later, he learnt a bit of regional history from the pen of his correspondent.

It appears that the part of France in which Father Morice was born was, centuries ago, in the hands of the English. This is a corner of Maine which is wedged

in, as it were, between the former provinces of Normandy and Brittany. That region is dotted over with old castles, some of which are still locally known to have been in favour of the English intruders. Although his family has not, so far, been traced back to an earlier date than 1611, it is quite possible, that it originated in an English soldier who settled in France during his country's domination of those northern provinces.<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not he be distantly connected with that illustrious family to which his New York correspondent referred in his letters, and about which he communicated to him so many copies of old parchments, Father Morice, destined to become such a faithful worker in the Pacific province and on the Western plains of Canada, was born on August 27, 1859, at Saint-Mars-sur-Colmont, department of Mayenne, France. His father was Jean Morice, originally of Parrigné, and his mother Virginie Seigneur, a native of Grand Oisseau, though at that time a resident of Saint-Mars. Their first child, the subject of these pages, was baptized on the morrow under the names of Adrian Gabriel Arsenius Mary, the two last of which he was to drop from his signature.

We might perhaps deem it worthy of remark that at an early date his intellect showed itself precocious, and his memory retentive. The mere mention of the facts which prove this oftentimes provoke incredulous smiles on the part of such as are told of them. He claims to remember some incidents connected with the time when he was still unable to walk.<sup>2</sup> He also

<sup>1</sup> If we are not mistaken, there was, but a few years ago, a general of that name in England.

<sup>2</sup> And he is issued of a family the members of which have always been able-bodied and none of them of abnormally slow growth.

tells of circumstances which happened when he was still the only child of the family, whose second was born two years after him. Lest anybody should be tempted to ascribe these and other little occurrences to a later period, this is what he himself says:

“Although I was born at Saint-Mars, my father caused, after his marriage, a house to be built at Oisseau, an important neighbouring parish, where he then settled. Now my efforts at walking, in reality mere gropings about the walls of an apartment, where I remember things that were in my way, occurred in the very house in which I was born before my parents moved out, and the next incident now present to my mind took place in our still unfinished home at Oisseau before any of my brothers were born.”

The dates of other circumstances connected with his early childhood are just as easy to ascertain. Adjoining the church of Oisseau,<sup>3</sup> between it and the three sides of a square formed by as many rows of houses, was the parish graveyard. In 1848,<sup>4</sup> as shown by official documents and tombstones, its site was moved to another place. Partly out of respect for consecrated ground, partly with a view to levelling down the soil which was sloping up to the church, excavating on a large scale went on, and the earth mixed with bones was daily carted away to the new site, from September, 1858, to July, 1860, after which some systematic levelling and sanding was done.

Despite the fact that the child was then scarcely more than one year old, these last operations made on him enough of an impression to have remained quite

<sup>3</sup> Or Grand Oisseau, as it is officially known, to distinguish it from another place of the same name but of less importance.

<sup>4</sup> In reality, the land for the cemetery had been acquired in 1838, but not utilized until five years later.

## 4 FIFTY YEARS IN WESTERN CANADA

clear in his memory.<sup>5</sup> He even vividly remembers that, among the skeletons thus unearthed, one was found standing up, instead of reclining, against the foundations of the church, a particularity which created quite a stir among the peaceful population of the village.

"Who can that be?" they asked one another. "Might that not be the bones of a Louiset, or member of the Lesser Church?"<sup>6</sup> "These people will never do like others, even after death."<sup>7</sup>

Another thing that Father Morice fully remembers is that, from his very tenderest years, he constantly aspired to the privilege of entering the priesthood. As a preparation to this coveted estate, he was wont gravely to ring a bell, call in his little companions, and address to them a few childish remarks, which he seriously called a sermon.

At seven years old he was admitted to the local school of the Holy Cross Brothers, whose founder, the Abbé Moreau, he remembers.<sup>8</sup> There he was a good

<sup>5</sup> For the benefit of such as might still be disposed to doubt, Father Morice says that he is ready to swear that he fails to remember having ever been told that the present central square of Oisseau was formerly the site of the parish graveyard.

Since the foregoing was written, documents have come from that place, among which is the following note or memo copied from the town hall register of the same: "8 November, 1863.—Work to be done about the church and construction of stairs" [leading thereto]. Now our friend seems still to see, for a long time after the carts had finished work on the new square, a sort of hill connecting the latter with the main entrance of the church, which was made of soil spared by the excavators, after which was commenced the flight of stone stairs mentioned in the official memo. And it could not be said that this may have been undertaken long after: other extracts from the same register show that what had been decided on was immediately executed.

<sup>6</sup> Made up of those who adhered to the Bishops who refused to acquiesce in the Pope's destitution *en bloc* of all the Bishops of France preparatory to the forming of a new, and more limited, hierarchy, according to the Concordat negotiated with Napoleon.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Morice, *Voyages et Aventures de Lebret à la Haye, Lisieux, Lourdes et Verdun*, pp. 247-48; Saint-Boniface, 1925.

<sup>8</sup> At any rate, he now imagines he must have been the priest who was once received with such deference by the brothers, and inspected their school with some show of authority.

pupil without, he claims, there being any special brilliancy about his studies. We cannot forego mentioning that, when in the higher grades of that school, his future tastes for literature and the publication of literary productions were forecast by a little venture which was nothing less than a diminutive, hand-written newspaper, which he daily composed out of a periodical pertaining to the teacher. On his way home, our child journalist would read it out to a group of good old country folk. This being during the painful days of the Franco-German war of 1870-71, it can easily be surmised how greatly valued was the news thus disseminated by the youthful publisher.

He had, however, to face just then a more serious undertaking. In furtherance of his never-failing aspirations after the ecclesiastical state, he commenced, under the tuition of a local clergyman, the Abbé Modeste Plessard, the study of Latin and Greek, which opened to him the doors of the Lesser Seminary of Mayenne. This he entered early in September, 1873. Again he modestly claims that his success there was quite ordinary, except in Latin versification and music.

That asylum of science and letters was to be for him but the stepping-stone to his real vocation, that of a missionary in foreign parts. During the scholastic year, 1873-74, the seminary of Mayenne was visited by two foreign missionaries who addressed the students. One of them, a Father Horner, was a member of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, whose special field is with the blacks of Africa. He hailed from far-off Zanzibar,<sup>9</sup> and tried his best to interest his hearers, but his lecture on his negro charge did not appeal to the religious nature of young Morice. The fact that,

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<sup>9</sup> Of which we think he ultimately became the Vicar Apostolic, or ecclesiastical superior.

## 6 FIFTY YEARS IN WESTERN CANADA

according to the stranger, his people were so timid that the lighting of a match would put them to flight, did not make an impression on the youth or stimulate in him any special zeal.

Things were different when Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin, O.M.I., the saintly apostle of the Western Canada Crees and Dénés, spoke to the seminarians. The evident holiness of the speaker, his unconcealed love for his twofold flock, and his quite apparent wish to win some of his hearers over to his poor mission, nay, the very circumstances that he would not spare them details of the difficult life in store for those who would follow him, immediately struck the fancy of young Mr. Morice.<sup>10</sup>

"That is what I want! To work and suffer for souls, to battle among, and conquer, the lowly of America, that is my vocation," he said to himself.

Whereupon he enquired of the venerable visitor what he had to do to be one day his disciple. As a consequence of this inquiry, he prepared himself for what the Oblates call the Juniorate, an institution of learning situated just at the opposite extremity of France, in Lorraine.

The fall of 1874 saw him at Notre-Dame de Sion, the seat of a famous pilgrimage some thirty miles from Nancy. Sion is probably so called after the Davidical mount in Palestine, because its site is an eminence, or hill, locally called a mountain. Intimately connected with the former seat of the counts of Vaudémont, two or three miles off, it has quite a history, while, from a topographical standpoint, the place is unique.

Mount Sion stands in a plain of Lorraine wherefrom, on clear days, one can see the blue hills of Alsace

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<sup>10</sup> For his Life, see *Monseigneur Grandin*, by Rev. E. Jonquet, O.M.I.; Montreal, 1903.

and, nearer, without the help of a telescope, the steeples or towers of no less than ninety-seven village churches. During the days of the fall, nothing is more striking than this immense region. The fog is then so dense over the plain that it is transformed into the very picture of the sea, which seems to start at one's feet, from the edge of the broad plateau which forms the top of the so-called mountain, then to all appearances an island in mid-ocean.<sup>11</sup>

Father Morice remained there three years, during which time he completed his classical course, and incidentally gave another significant token of the great versatility which he was so persistently to display during his whole career.

Though at times slightly at variance with the Director of the Juniorate, young Morice was more or less of a favourite with him. His superior therefore procured for him a tiny printing outfit, something so very elementary that it would have seemed almost impossible to print a single page with it. Any printer will understand that when he is told that the outfit did not even comprise an inking roller! The operation had to be done with a sort of rounded plug, which was repeatedly stamped over the form!

Our student, however, printed a whole book therewith, page after page—a veritable *tour de force*, according to the Rt. Rev. Father Fabre, O.M.I., who saw both the outfit and its products.

Another incident in this connection will affix the proper mark on Father Morice's usual way of working. So taken up was he by his type-setting and printing enterprise that, the first evening he undertook the former, he forgot to go to bed until it was half-past one

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Morice, *Voyages et Aventures de Lebret à la Haye*, p. 159.  
F.M.—2

## 8 FIFTY YEARS IN WESTERN CANADA

in the morning, although he was as yet scarcely sixteen!

If the reader will bear in mind this little particular, he will have the key to the future missionary-scientist's ways. Too often did he commit excesses of that kind, and it is really wonderful that, in spite of such self-abuse—no recesses, scarcely ever any relaxation from work—he should have reached the threescore and ten which he attained last year.

We may as well state at the outset and in line with the foregoing that, though he was always a great worker, he generally attended to the requirements of what was essentially inherent to his vocation more out of personal taste and natural attraction than because of a sense of duty, a circumstance, he adds, which detracts somewhat from his merit.

Be this as it may, when his classical studies were over, he repaired to Nancy, where he started, August 14, 1877, the year of novitiate which was to entitle him to enter the Order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.), to which belonged the late Mgr. Grandin, his guide and adviser.

The Oblates, who have done so much for the whole of Canada, east and west, form a missionary body, founded in France in 1816, with a view to preaching to and catechizing the lower classes of society, such as the country people and converting and civilizing the humblest. They work among the aborigines of North America, the Cinghalese and Tamils of Ceylon, the Zulus and Basutos of South Africa, and the like.

By his first vows,<sup>12</sup> Brother Morice, as he was then called, became for one year member of the Order, after a period of apprenticeship which was hard on him, not because of the routine exercises or the curbing of one's

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<sup>12</sup> Taken at Nancy on the 15th of Aug., 1878.

passions and temper proper to that stage of the religious life, but because of the strictly enforced abstention from all intellectual work to which he was condemned. With the fondness for mental activity for which he was already remarkable, he did indeed attempt, for the lack of another subject, to learn the German language from one of his fellow novices,<sup>13</sup> but he had to deny himself even that satisfaction.

From Nancy, Lorraine, he passed (September, 1878) to the ancient city of Autun, in the centre of France, where he immediately started his philosophical studies.

Autun, in Burgundy, is the *Augustodunum*, or Fort August, of the Romans, who have left there quite a number of monuments and ruins which even now seem proof against the ravages of time. There are two magnificent gateways, from the top of one of which Saint Symphorian's mother encouraged him to fortitude and perseverance as he was going to martyrdom;<sup>14</sup> There are also remains of a temple, a theatre and city walls, the sight of which could not but further feed that taste for archaeological lore which was one of Brother Morice's hobbies.

Meanwhile, what he had to do at the old Roman city was to pursue the study of philosophy. This he specially relished, and soon realized that intellectual labour was becoming more and more easy to him, a circumstance which may account for the amount of time he even then consecrated to other side studies. God knows, and Protestants can scarcely have an idea, how very difficult is Catholic philosophy. What Protestants call by that name has no relation to, and

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<sup>13</sup> Brother, afterward Father, Nicholas Hehn, a native of German-speaking Lorraine.

<sup>14</sup> A scene which has been rendered famous by the masterpiece of a French painter, Ingres.

## 10 FIFTY YEARS IN WESTERN CANADA

cannot compare with, what Catholics regard as the genuine article. How abstruse its reasoning and profound every part of its syllogism building and argumentation! Kant's and some other like thinkers' works are almost child's play in comparison to it.

It was at that time all the harder, as scholars had to go in one year through what it now takes two years to learn. Without counting that the whole curriculum, text book, recitations by the pupil and explanations by the professor, are in Latin, English being inadequate to the task of rendering the psychological niceties often met with, especially in an author like Sanseverino, who has remained famous for his provoking abstruseness, consequent on forced conciseness.

Brother Morice not only enjoyed the abstract character of the subjects to be assimilated, but he managed to find time for quite a few personal studies and free readings. In fact, he to-day confesses that he then spent much of his time on items which were altogether foreign to the scholastic studies.

To such an extent was this true that a schoolmate of his, the late Father Grandfils, O.M.I., twenty years later made him feel quite uneasy in presence of Archbishop Duhamel, of Ottawa, by confiding to that prelate Brother Morice's past misdeeds in that line.

"How often did I wish I had his facility for learning!" he declared. "Almost to the last five minutes of the study-time, he would busy himself with all kinds of other work, then take up his philosophy book, and . . . he would always know his lessons."<sup>15</sup>

There may be some little exaggeration in this last remark, if we are to believe Father Morice himself. Nevertheless, a little incident which occurred near

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<sup>15</sup> This was at Hull, P.Q., in the course of 1896.

the end of the scholastic year helps to determine the degree of proficiency then attained by him. His class counted fifteen scholastics, French, Belgian, Irish, Spanish and German-speaking. On the occasion of a visit of the General of the Order, Father Fabre, a strict disciplinarian of brilliant intellect, theses in theology and philosophy had to be prepared and publicly read in his presence by the best student in every course. A theme, or topic, that of the "Innate Ideas," was therefore allotted for treatment to three "philosophers" whom the professor deemed the best in his class. Brother Morice was one of those three, and when one of their dissertations had to be singled out to be read before the General, it was that of our friend which was chosen for the honour.

It would seem as if the aptitude for mechanical reproduction, or at any rate readiness for extra work, which he had displayed during his juniorate, and which he was to develop to such an extent in his after life, had been bruited at the scholasticate of Autun. We see him, in the first year of his theological studies, this time not printing, but lithographing by a new process, the course in Holy Scriptures then given by Rev. J. B. Lemius, O.M.I., who was later to make for himself such a name as a popular preacher and a sacred orator of remarkably winning eloquence, when in charge of the basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre, Paris.

Brother Morice should have made his perpetual profession on the fifteenth of August, 1879. The presence at Autun of the members of the Chapter General of that year rendered this impossible. It was put back till after the end of the annual retreat, which then closed on October 9, when he became an Oblate for life.

Shortly after, his superiors showed that they had

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sufficient faith in him to dispose of him before the normal time, and, contrary to custom, they sent him out to foreign missions before he had been ordained.

It is true that the civil authorities, then made up of atheists and so-called free-thinkers, took great care to accelerate such a premature "obedience." It was in the spring of 1880, when they trampled under foot every principle of their pet Revolution slogan: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. They indeed granted liberty and equal rights to every association, provided it was of an anti-Christian complexion; but religious Congregations they unmercifully dissolved, and confiscated their property. That was their mark of fraternity.

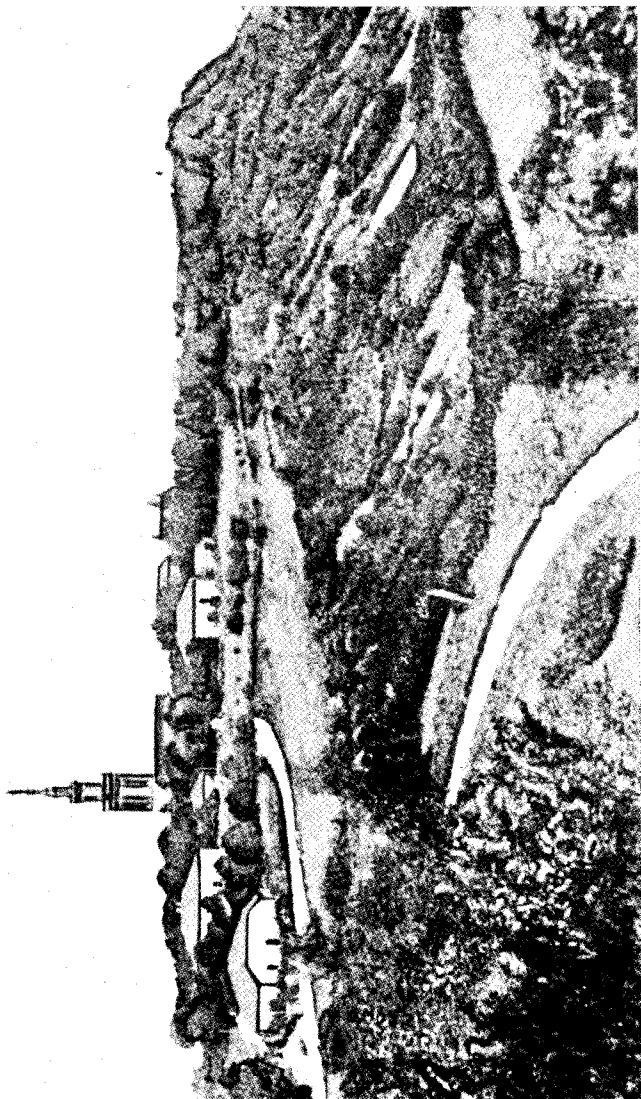
The sending out of the young religious meant for him the beginning of a new life, the unfolding of a broader horizon. He was then directed not to Monseigneur Grandin's mission field, as he had expected, but still farther, to distant British Columbia, with the Indian missions of that country as his ultimate goal.

After having bidden farewell to his family, the levite set off from Le Havre for America on the steamer *Gascogne*. He was accompanied by two other Oblates, Brothers Nicolas Coccolla and Dominic Chiappini, Corsicans slightly older as age and Orders went, but admitted later in the ranks of their common Institute. They left France on June 26, 1880, and, after a passage of thirteen days, landed at New York, where an Oblate priest<sup>16</sup> had come from Ottawa to pilot them.

As long as their Mentor was with them, all went well. They could wonder at ease at the strange ways of America, such as the absence there of anything to

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<sup>16</sup> Father Prevost, who was, five years later, to become chaplain to some of the troops which went to put down the Riel Rebellion.



NOTRE DAME DE SION



drink—they had so far thought water made for frogs and brutes, and tea for Chinese. But when left to themselves on the broad American plains while making for San Francisco, as there was at that time no railway line through Canada, the difficulties inherent to travelling in a strange land blessed (?) with an unknown language were soon in evidence.

Among the accomplishments which the youngest of the trio had endeavoured to acquire, was some initiation into the intricacies of the English language. He did know some of it as you learn it through books, and his companions—who knew none at all—were persuaded that he had mastered it. Hence there was constant recourse to his services as interpreter, at a time when he found the Yankee twang and precipitate diction often above his capacity.

They thus crossed the United States, seeing a few Indians at the western stations and at least one of their historic resorts, Fort Laramie, then an aggregation of dirty low huts. After which they had to swallow clouds of the fine sand of the Great American Desert, wonder at the queer sights of Salt Lake City, and slide down, at a tremendous rate, the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

As no railway line extended north in the direction of British Columbia, they had to wait four or five days at Archbishop Alemany's residence in San Francisco, pending the return of the boat which was to take them to Victoria, British Columbia. This meant a second sea voyage, much worse than the first, along the so-called Pacific coast, where they were rolled right and left for the space of five days. They arrived at Victoria, on the outskirts of the promised land,<sup>17</sup> early

<sup>17</sup> The vicariate apostolic, or infant diocese, to which they were sent, did not comprise Vancouver Island.

in the morning of July 26, exactly one month after they had left France.

The first impression the new place made on Brother Morice was one of stillness, if not sleepiness and backwardness, which notably contrasted with the bustle characteristic of the American cities. Victoria then boasted some fifty-eight hundred inhabitants, most of whom seemed to have been asleep when the French trio landed in their place, and none of whom appeared to hurry about anything once they did get up.

Most of its present beautiful edifices, such as the superb Parliament Buildings, the Catholic Cathedral, Convent and Hospital, the Metropolitan Methodist Church, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, the Post Office and Drill Hall, the Provincial Jail, as well as the various more or less palatial hotels, chief among which is easily the majestic Empire Hotel, were not then in existence, nor even thought of.

A few moments after landing, the three young travellers found themselves in the Bishop's humble residence, adjoining his modest cathedral, a frame building on the shore of the now filled-in bay. Bishop John B. Brondel was then (1880) the titular of the Catholic See of Victoria; but he happened to be absent when the strangers arrived.

They noticed, instead, by the side of one or two older priests, a young, tall and delicate-looking clergyman, apparently stationed there only a very few months. Father Morice remembers how his confreres were teasing him on his shyness and dilatoriness in starting to preach in Chinook to the swarthy natives settled in the city. This was Father John Nicholas Lemmens, a Dutch priest who was, in course of time, to become Bishop of Victoria. He died ultimately in Guatemala.

Perfect strangers in a new land, which was outside of the Oblate religious jurisdiction, Brothers Coccolla, Chiappini and Morice did not tarry long on Vancouver Island. They boarded another boat, the third since leaving their native country, which took them over to New Westminster, a small town with a long name, where they were received with open arms by their new superior, Bishop Louis Joseph D'Herbomez, O.M.I.,<sup>18</sup> who was ever to manifest real attachment to the youngest, to-day Father Morice.

The city where he had his see was a place of two thousand inhabitants at most, remarkable chiefly for its steep streets, quite a number of which were still studded with stern-looking cedar stumps, which seemed to defy the efforts of man. It was, however, the only place of any importance on the mainland. Of course, Vancouver had then absolutely no existence, its site being occupied by a saw-mill called Granville, on the sea shore.

New Westminster was connected with Burrard Inlet by a fine road, which looked like one of those European avenues bordered by trees. Those which were to be seen just north of the Fraser River town were of the very finest, extremely tall and straight as gigantic needles. Then a fourth boat, the *Reliance*, which was little more than an old tub,<sup>19</sup> took them up the Fraser to a point known to-day as Mission City, where they were to complete their theological studies preparatory to being ordained. They had at last reached their new home.

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<sup>18</sup> The very first Bishop of continental British Columbia, to which he had been appointed as early as the 10th of Dec., 1863. He was to govern it, most wisely, until June 3, 1890.

<sup>19</sup> Father Morice still remembers the shrill cry of distress her whistle blew one night she had been penetrated by a snag a little above the Mission.

Brothers Coccolla and Chiappini being already deacons, were promoted to the priesthood on Passion Sunday, 1881, at the same time that their younger companion was made a subdeacon by the late Bishop D'Herbomez, first Vicar Apostolic of British Columbia.

Saint Mary's Mission, as it was then called, was the most peaceful and least pretentious of places, a quiet oasis of very restricted size on the skirt of the primeval forest, with only two incipient farms, those of a Mr. Perkins and a Mr. Wells, as satellites, to which might be added the little clearing of a French half-breed, Gabriel Lacroix, who was in later years to settle on the Bulkley River, within Father Morice's missionary district.

The establishment consisted of a fairly large church with a white-washed interior, the unusual size of which was required by occasional Indian gatherings, or series of predication. This stood on the lower reach, where the railway line now passes, and had for immediate companions, right and left, a rather primitive house of rough, unplaned boards for the priests and a slightly better finished convent for the sisters, who conducted a school for Indian girls, while the fathers had, directly under Brother Henry, an Industrial School for boys. Just east of the building belonging to that institution, was a tiny creek, at the mouth of which stood a grist-mill the property of the Mission, but operated by a Mr. Threataway.

After the departure of Fathers Coccolla and Chiappini, Brother Morice was left there to continue his studies alone, under the Rev. Alphonse Carion, O.M.I., a worthy Belgian priest in charge of the establishment, who, unfortunately, had more time to consecrate to the farm across the Fraser than to theology. The ever active mind of Brother Morice

would not content itself with imbibing theological lore. Even at such an early date, he was more or less of a missionary, teaching catechism to the boys of the local school, and especially music, both vocal and instrumental.

About ten years before, a Father Denis Lamure, who met an untimely death by being accidentally shot by his companion, as both were trudging through the bush in search of much needed game, had gathered up the elements of a brass band which, never being used since, but, on the contrary, getting kicked about and ill-treated by successive newcomers, had finally been put out of order and were then resting under a layer of dust.

Brother Morice tried to remedy their ills; he healed their wounds, patched up the best he could their broken limbs and stopped the holes in their carcasses. With these he formed a band of Indian boys who soon attained a high degree of proficiency, the natives being naturally musicians. So much so, indeed, that, as an organ was needed for the local church and no funds were available to acquire it, the young band-master hit upon a plan which did not lack the element of boldness, considering the little experience he had as yet of the ways of the country. Piloted by Father Jean-Marie Le Jeune, a young priest of the same Order who had reached British Columbia but nine months before himself<sup>20</sup> and who did all the talking, though he was the most unmusical of men, he went up with his native band, first to Yale, at that time a fairly lively place where a regular concert was given, and then above, where the Canadian Pacific

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<sup>20</sup> Father Le Jeune is still alive and hale at Kamloops, and is to-day the doyen of all the priests of British Columbia, as Father Morice is of those of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

had just commenced to tear a way for its future line along the steep banks of the river.

In the evening, after supper his boys would "discourse sweet music" to the camps of workingmen, and a collection was taken up by Father Le Jeune. The men were generally lost in admiration of the ability of the performers, some of whom seemed to them so young that they were inclined to imagine they were there only for sake of number. They would even offer them money to hear them play separately their own instruments and make sure that they were not dummies. Practically everywhere people showed themselves generous to the troupe, and when the youngsters returned to St. Mary's, they had amassed more than was necessary to defray the cost of a good organ, the playing of which at church naturally devolved on the bandmaster.

This was in 1881. Another form of extra-theological activity for Brother Morice—for he must always have extra work to do—was the reprinting of a series of letters his Bishop had written for the *British Columbian* on the ever important question of education. We have not forgotten our subject's passion for printing. He had acquired for his new post a little printing press which was more practical than the trinket he had used at N. D. de Sion, but, nevertheless, was still little more than a toy, since its outfit did not even comprise a composing-stick. With this, however, he printed a neat little pamphlet, which was sent to all the members of the Provincial Legislature and the principal institutions of the country. Very few, if any, of these reminders of the early days now remain in British Columbia. If appreciated in proportion to their scarcity, they should now fetch a pretty good price from bibliophiles.

Time went on, with the aspiring missionary's work being divided between the study of theology and other cares. Being now alone and free to absorb knowledge as fast as his intellect would allow, with no extra time to be spent on others by the professor, he reached the end of the scholastic curriculum one year ahead of time. He had been some time in deacon's Orders; and he was now told to prepare for the coming of a much greater day, when, on the second of July, 1882, he was promoted to the priesthood with a sixteen months' dispensation.

He was now Father Morice, and was soon to become a full-fledged missionary.



**MISSIONARY**



## CHAPTER II

### MISSIONARY

[1882-1896]

WE HAVE tarried on minor details of the first years of Father Morice's life perhaps more than it will be necessary to do in those which are to follow. We do not regret details in this connection, the foregoing pages having given an idea of our subject's temperament and his appetite for work, especially extra, not routine, work. Since the child is the father of the man, we can by this time easily foresee that Father Morice was not to feel satisfied with a common, colourless career.

His superior, kindly Bishop D'Herbomez, seems at first to have intended him for work among the English. Ever since his arrival in the country, when the levite was as yet only in Minor Orders, he had been made to preach little sermons the English of which was revised by a lay brother who had been a steamboat captain. For five weeks or so, he had to continue the same work before a more refined audience, at St. Peter's Cathedral, New Westminster, until a representative of the superior general of his Order, Father Aimé Martinet, passing through the country on an official visit, sent him up to William's Lake Mission, Cariboo, where he was for some time at the head of a school for whites, a post which was scarcely to his liking, yet where he did his best to give satisfaction.

There is at least one person in Victoria who will remember him at his desk, in that establishment. This is none other than the Hon. Denis Murphy, of the

Supreme Court of British Columbia. The little boy, such as he was then, rather took the fancy of the young priest. His teacher esteemed him, because of the intellectual affinity there was between the two. Father Morice could not but remark that, instead of studying his lessons, the pupil was indulging in readings of his own choosing. What did that matter, however, as long as he could answer the questions put him?

The young professor was more or less languishing in this prosaic post of *magister*, and longed for Indian work, especially in the north for which he always felt a special attraction. As he must always busy himself with more work than was required by the office to which he was appointed, he had soon singled out among his boys one Jimmy Alexander, who was a half-breed hailing, he was told, from the very northern mission in which he hoped one day to labour. Having ascertained that he remembered some of his mother's language, his teacher endeavoured to extract all he could from the same, and thus came to compose a little Déné vocabulary. This was his very first venture in the native linguistic field: we shall soon see that it was not to be his last.

At first his Bishop would not hear of the far-off Mission of Stuart Lake for the young priest, whose health was seriously impaired by reason of the terrible diet provided at St. Mary's. This caused his superior to hit upon an analogous position for a provisional substitute: we mean the mission of the Chilcotin Indians, whose habitat extended just west of the Fraser at about the same latitude, and south. This he assigned to Father Morice.

On January 29, 1883, the good prelate wrote him: "You now have a fine field opened to you. You will

find therein much land to clear, but work is what you want. Set out, therefore, to labour with courage and perseverance. Provide yourself with a good dose of patience and zeal for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. Break up, sow and cultivate the best you can and ask the Almighty to bless your labours."<sup>1</sup>

It was not without reason that Father Morice was warned to "provide himself with a good dose of patience" if he wanted to succeed; for the Indians who were entrusted to his care in the beginning of 1883 were then by far the least amenable to Christianity and civilization of the whole province, though they were not by any means unknown to the whites. Indeed, they were but too well-known to them.

In 1863, when the white men were at work upon the trail between the seacoast and Fort Alexander, on the middle Fraser, they were assailed by those aborigines, who killed twenty-one of their party of twenty-four. A few days only after the first visit which Father Morice paid them, two of their young men shot with their rifles two Chinamen who declined to lodge them for the night. The murderers were arrested and underwent their trial at Clinton, and, when the questions usual in such circumstances were asked, one of the Indians impatiently remarked:

"Why all this questioning? I told you and repeat that it is I who killed the Chinamen. My father died by the rope; by the rope I want to die!"<sup>2</sup>

The brothers of the murderers deserved also to be arrested for their depredations against the whites. Moreover, during his interrogatory, one of the two

<sup>1</sup> Morice, *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*, p. 1; Paris, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> He was the son of one of those who had to suffer for the massacre of 1863.

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culprits gave the name of another Chilcotin who had massacred a white man, his wife, and children.

Such were the Indians confided to the care of the inexperienced young priest, Father Morice. Lack of a sufficient number of missionaries had resulted in complete religious neglect, and the result was apparent.

The first care of the new missionary was to learn their language, a rather hard undertaking, considering that, in his case, continued residence among his charges could not be thought of. His home remained at William's Lake Mission, from which he was periodically to sally out to visit them.

The Chilcotins are, in British Columbia, the southernmost branch of that great family called the Dénés, or Men, a race which is elsewhere rather progressive, peaceful and prone to imitate, even in religious matters, those whom they deem superior to themselves.<sup>3</sup> This, however, is not a rule without exceptions, even outside of British Columbia, as the reader can realize when told that the Apaches of the Far South belong to the same race.

The Chilcotins, in temperament and general dispositions, can be said to resemble the Apaches more than their immediate relatives to the east of the Rockies. They were then wholly unredeemed savages. Hence Father Morice felt elated at the prospect ahead of him, and he to-day claims the distinction of being probably the only living missionary who ever saw

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<sup>3</sup> Hence it can be seen that, no doubt to enhance the merits of our missionary, the author of *Father Morice* rather overdoes at their expense the contrast he wants to establish (pp. 2 and 3) between the Crees and Blackfeet, on the one hand, and the British Columbia Dénés, on the other. Father Morice assures us that the latter are much more easy to convert; the trouble, the difficulty, he adds, is to keep them converted, that is to see that, once baptized, they conform their life to the standard which has been proposed to them as a model (*Cf. Father Morice*, by Dr. Thomas O'Hagan; Toronto, a.d.).

aborigines in their really native state: clad in wild beasts' skins.

At least such was the condition at that time of about half of the tribe, which was called Stone (or Mountain) Chilcotins. These were a nomadic people, though they would occasionally repair to a group of log huts, in the Chilcotin valley, which had been commenced but were never completed. Even among the more advanced followers of the great chief, Anarhèm, only two shawls could be found to help decorate what did duty for a church. If such minute details may be allowed, in order graphically to picture conditions as they were amongst them in Father Morice's time, and as they normally are anywhere before the intrusion of the European races, we may add that there was then in the whole tribe but one dog which was not an aboriginal half-wild animal. The others were uniformly small, grey, wolf-like dogs, with pointed ears and all of the same colour.<sup>4</sup> The exception was highly prized, in fact, known far and wide under the name of *Nitd-lli*, "the white dog."

After he had got in touch with his charge, the young missionary sought practical means of acquiring their language. He found these in the services of an old Chilcotin woman who was married to a negro residing on a piece of land belonging to the Mission where he was stationed. He would repair to her shack every afternoon or so, and, through the medium

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<sup>4</sup> Has the reader ever noticed that one of the results of domestication is diversity of skin colouring? The wolves of the same species are all of the same colour, but not the domestic dog; the grouse and other fowls of one kind look alike, but not our chickens; all the buffaloes are chocolate brown, but cattle may be black, white, red or "pinto"; the wild boars are uniform in colour, but the pigs are not, any more than our cats, though their wild relatives are.

of the Chinook jargon,<sup>5</sup> would get from her as much information as he could, that is, as much as her rather short patience would allow him to gather.

The bee gets its honey more easily. It is true that Father Morice's "flower" was already not a little faded. . . . Fortunately, he had a good ear, being, as we have seen, something of a musician. He is wont to declare that if he had not caught in his first lesson those extremely delicate sounds commonly called "clicks," or vocal explosions, which he never heard a white man properly render outside of philological circles, he would never have been able to learn the language, for those phonetic peculiarities are of paramount importance, and totally change the meaning of the words. With his usual eagerness, he soon made good progress in that study. Instead of allowing himself to get discouraged by the many mistakes he was bound to make in the beginning, in a comparatively short time he had gathered up quite a vocabulary, noted down a number of phrases and sentences, and, through the process of deduction, made for himself the outlines of a grammar.

In proportion as he became acquainted with the language, he would give his people more and more

<sup>5</sup> For the benefit of readers outside of British Columbia, it may be said that Chinook is a jargon made up of ill-pronounced words of the original Chinook language, now extinct; of other terms which originated in the Nootka dialect and other native idioms quite as much disfigured, as well as of French and English words oftentimes hard to recognize. This lingo imperceptibly came into existence through commerce between fur traders and Indians, and most British Columbia missionaries content themselves with its use to teach their charge, relying on the services of a professional interpreter to properly explain what Chinook leaves to the sagacity of the hearer to guess. Fathers Morice and Le Jeune were the only Catholic missionaries on the mainland part of the province (together with the late Father Brabant on Vancouver Island) to have mastered sufficiently the native languages to be able to use them in the pulpit.

practical instructions, or little sermons. Then he thundered against vice, denounced reprehensible native customs, such as conjuring, which he called the prayer of the devil, condemned violence and licentiousness, and at the same time he commended the learning of prayers and catechism as a preparation for the reception of baptism. He does not claim to have changed the Chilcotins during the short time he passed amongst them, but he made an impression on them, for to this day he is remembered as "the young priest with the strong words."

One of the aboriginal abuses he denounced, and sometimes actually stopped at his own peril, was that of gambling. Two partners squatting on the ground face one another, jerking their bodies to the time of the "tune," and slyly changing from hand to hand, under a blanket which partially covers their limbs, two little pieces of bone, one of which has a special mark, while an assistant is beating a drum or a kettle and the crowd sings out, in time, unending *he*'s, *hi*'s, *ho*'s. After a while, one of the partners has to guess in which of the gambler's hands is the marked bone. There is something very simple, nay, almost childish, in this pastime; yet the passion for that kind of gambling, known under the name of "lahal" on the coast and in the adjacent country, is such that no reader can have an adequate idea of its hold on the natives. The following little anecdote will effectively illustrate it.

Father Morice would generally have in each place a "retreat," or revival, of one or two weeks' duration, at the end of which a representative of the next village would come for him with a horse to carry his impedimenta and all the requisites for the celebration of Mass. As he was one day closing his missionary

labours at Anarhèm's camp, *Ezoosee*, The Magpie, sent by the Stone Chilcotins, put in an appearance.

On the morrow, the priest being ready to go, instructed the Magpie, a jolly good fellow, to get his horse for his baggage. The Magpie did not budge, but scratched his head awaiting further orders. On the same being repeated, he said he had no horse, but instead was blessed with a pair of good shoulders. Whereupon the bystanders began to smile and chuckle among themselves.

"How is that?" insisted the missionary. "I saw you coming with a horse yesterday."

"I don't have it any more," said the Indian.

"You sold it?"

"No."

"You gave it away?"

"Still less."

"Has it been stolen?"

"Not in the least."

"Perhaps it broke loose, and you could not find it?"

"It did not."

"Then what did you do with it?"

For once in his life the Magpie had lost his loquacity. Every one was intently looking at him, wondering if he was going to risk a confession. Not he. He merely repeated that he had good shoulders, and that the priest's impedimenta would not weigh more than feathers to his robust frame. Had he been a Christian, he would have avowed that he had passed the night gambling, and had lost the horse he had brought for the use of the missionary.<sup>6</sup>

Another foible of the Chilcotins at that time, which

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*, p. 34.

was less connected with religion, and must rather be referred to civilization as such, was a most repulsive personal uncleanness, with consequences easy to guess, but hard to couch on paper, from which Father Morice had much to suffer. Though they did occasionally clean their hands by filling their mouths with water which they spurted out on them, washing one's person was then practically unknown to most of the Chilcotins, who replaced it by face painting.

Our missionary well remembers a big girl who, if properly clad and clean, would certainly not have been uncomely. She wore for a dress an ample cloak of marmot skins sewn together, with the tails out as ornaments. This was fastened to the waist with a leather belt adorned with small trinkets such as beaver teeth, fawn hoofs and even thimbles, which produced a discreet clanging as she walked about. A pair of dressed skin leggings and moccasins of the same material completed her costume, together with bead pendants hanging from her hair on either side of her head. Her face was decorated by a heavy coat of vermillion, while her hands were covered with a no less generous layer of . . . dirt. After having several times reproved such untidy habits, their pastor, seeing that his fulminations remained unheeded, boldly announced that thenceforth he would shake no dirty hands.

This was to the natives the very limit, the refusal of the priest's hand being considered as nothing short of a calamity, a sort of excommunication. As such it was not to be endured. In consequence they took their precautions. On the day when the missionary was expected,<sup>7</sup> they would station a sentinel on a near-by

<sup>7</sup> Which was easily known to them through some kind of calendar, one day of which they would regularly strike off after their evening prayers.

height, and as soon as "he that speaks for God" was sighted, young and old, big and small, would rush to the river and wash their hands.<sup>8</sup>

One can gain an idea of the unfamiliarity of the Chilcotins with the most elementary rites of the Church when Father Morice first ministered to them by the fact that, having once been told of the death of a child, he promised to go and bury him; but upon his arrival, he found that not only had the natives already themselves interred the little body, but they were gathered in a big lodge feasting on dried meat and a kind of small potato-like shallots, which they used to dry up with a string passed through them as through so many beads.

Their little respect for human life was even then exemplified by two young men who, living out of the missionary's reach, killed a white man who had ventured in their vicinity. The priest was riding on his way back to William's Lake Mission, *via* Soda Creek, when the two fugitives overtook him, or, rather, descended a hill on the way as he was going up another in front of them. Although their hands were red with the blood of one of his own race, they recoiled at the thought of being seen by him, and dodged aside, plunging into the forest to put a notable distance between him and them. Father Morice passed the next night at the home of an Irishman, John Salmon, not far from Soda Creek, whose union with a Shushwap woman he blessed. As no ring could be found for the ceremony, the missionary made one by casting one or two bullets in the ground, in which a little circle had been dug by way of a mould. That same night the two murderers who had spared the priest stole the two best horses in the Irishman's stable and made their escape with them.

<sup>8</sup> *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*, p. 39.



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Little by little, as some progress was made in the ways propounded by the priest, religious gatherings became more frequent, and people had to think of building churches. In spite of the accomplishments he had acquired at college and elsewhere, our friend was scarcely up to the task of putting up such edifices. When, therefore, it became a question of providing Anarhèm's people with such a commodity, he had to resort to the services of a kind old priest who had passed most of his life as a lay brother, consequent on an accident which had, he imagined, disabled him for the celebration of Mass.<sup>9</sup> Father Blanchet, such was his name, laid the foundations, or ground pieces, of the church for him, after which he returned to William's Lake Mission. All went well enough until the shingling had to be tackled. Then nobody knew how to do it until a little old man called *Noolhterè*, the Wolverine, tired of hearing so many contradictory opinions expressed, stood up and said with an air of importance:

"Really, my brothers have not more intelligence than my little finger. It goes without saying that the shingling of a roof has to be commenced by the top." Then, as if modestly to cut short the compliments that his find deserved: "You see, I have travelled among the whites," he said.<sup>10</sup>

As this church could not be finished in time for Christmas, the most poetic feast of the Christian year, especially dear to the native heart, and also in order to punish the people of a village who had shown themselves remiss in complying with their pastor's

<sup>9</sup> Father George Blanchet O.M.I., being as yet but a scholastic brother, had had one of his fingers accidentally shot off as he was hunting for ducks by the sea shore.

<sup>10</sup> *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*, p. 32.

directions, he resolved to pass this season with the despised Stone Chilcotins.

He had himself to suffer from the consequences of that decision. Riding with a temperature of thirty-five degrees below zero, he froze one of his knees, and had to be assisted off his horse. Then, as there was no church, the midnight service had to be held in an old abandoned lodge, the only building large enough to accommodate the local population. Its mud roof was repaired as well as possible under the circumstances, and most of the interstices between the slender logs were stopped with moss.

Nevertheless, it must be said that it was a very cold Midnight Mass which marked the Christmas of 1884 in the Chilcotin valley. As there was at that time not one stove among the natives of the same, even the sacramental wine froze during the service, while, outside, the little half-wild Indian dogs were howling themselves hoarse under the sting of the bitter frost. Yet the celebration was not without its element of luxury. It had its illumination, that indispensable adjunct to such a feast. This consisted of five pieces of tallow candles, which made quite an impression on the primitive congregation, who had never seen so many burning at one time.

Apart from the Chilcotins, Father Morice had early been put in charge of four villages of the southernmost division of the great Carrier tribe, of which further mention is to be made, namely, those of Fort Alexander, Quesnel, Blackwater<sup>11</sup> and Lhuskez, without counting a fifth, Lhkacho, whose inhabitants had as yet never seen a priest. The Carriers of Fort Alex-

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<sup>11</sup> A village which was in reality on the Fraser, though at a very short distance from the mouth of the Blackwater, after which its people were named.

ander, or Alexandria, not far from which a number of Chilcotins had also settled, as American aborigines can settle, as well as those of Blackwater, were only the remnants of a formerly numerous population; but the other villages were at that time fairly populous.

In all of them, big or small, the new missionary found well disposed Indians, weak indeed before temptation, but more religiously inclined than the Chilcotins. Many of them had been baptized, and the practice of religion was already having a beneficial influence on their lives which greatly pleased the young priest. Lhuskez, the farthest place, lying on the route of Alex. Mackenzie in 1793, was visited in July, 1883. Father Morice had expected to find there a great many of the Lhkacho people, who had promised to come and meet him; but they had left after waiting two months for him. He had therefore to return them the compliment the following year, by going himself to see them at home.

This was in June, 1884. The trip was a cold one: it snowed a good part of the first day.<sup>12</sup> After a long ride, the wayfarers, dressed in summer clothing, were benumbed with cold and almost helpless when in the evening they reached a place favourable for camping. There, one of the first cares of the half-frozen party was to make some warm drink. But, lo! when the liquid that cheers but does not inebriate was ready, it was found that there were no cups for it. They had all been forgotten at Lhuskez!

A white man would have been somewhat non-plussed under such circumstances; not so an Indian. Without saying a word, one of the two who accom-

<sup>12</sup> It may be remarked in this connection that Father Morice has seen snow fall during all the months of the year, July included, in some parts of British Columbia.

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panied the priest immediately cut a piece of bark off a neighbouring spruce, while another was looking for thorns which served as pins or nails, to fasten the turned-up edges of the bark in the shape of a cup. When you need it, you can drink as well from that as from the richest gold goblet.

Arrived in view of the village towards which priest and natives had turned their steps, the former's heart beat hard in his breast.

"How delighted the poor Indians will be!" he thought.

Cruel deception! Not one of them was to be seen in any of their old smoky lodges! One of the priest's companions then remembered that the population was to go to the sea, not very far away. They must surely be on their way home by this time, he said. Perhaps they may even have reached their fishery, as salmon is now coming up streams in those parts. So: "Onward for the fishery!" cried out Father Morice.

After a full day's ride through the dense forest and across the big Salmon River, which had to be forded in a particularly crooked and rather dangerous way, the missionary, tired out and hungry, reached the fishery, which stands just below a fall in a stream which rushes down, with great precipitation and tumult, towards beautiful snow-clad mountains through a gorge which it must pass to fall into the sea. Another deception! They find here just one single family which has not accompanied the others to the coast!

These details are given as specimens of the many disappointments which too often face the shepherd in search of his sheep.

Failing a crowd to instruct in the truths of Christian faith, the wayfarers, or at least their chief, endeavoured

to become instructed in one of the many ways and means which human ingenuity has devised to obviate the pangs of hunger in primitive quarters. The creek whose roaring filled the air, was narrow, but extremely swift, nay, almost a succession of cascades. This is how the best is made of that double circumstance.

"In some places where the stream contracts to an insignificant width and, in escaping from its rocky embankment, produces a fall deep enough temporarily to impede the salmon's course upwards, the Carriers simply bridge the fall over and with bark ropes suspend therefrom a sort of lattice, seven or eight feet wide, the lower extremity of which is curved up like a pot-hanger. When the fish attempts to jump over the fall, it strikes the latticed barrier and drops back into the basket-like bottom."<sup>13</sup> Of this Father Morice had an instance under his eyes.

To return to those who had contrived it and who seemed to be undiscoverable. The missionary was more lucky the following year. After his third annual visit to Lhuskez, he had the happiness of finding at home the people of Lhkacho. It is impossible to describe the joy and noisy demonstrations, tempered by awe, with which they greeted him. These can be readily surmised by those who remember that they had never seen a minister of religion before.

Their guest of a few days baptized, as usual, the little children; taught the adults by means of an interpreter, as they did not understand the Chilcotin dialect; and put up in their midst that so useful organization to be seen in all Catholic villages: chief, captain or subchief, watchmen and soldiers.

He then promised them a second visit the following year and returned home *via* Lhuskez, the Chilcotin

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<sup>13</sup> Morice, *The Western Dénés*, p. 129; Toronto, 1890.

valley, and Soda Creek—a most round-about, but the only possible, way. That visit was never to be paid. Father Morice could now give out short, simple and, of course, not perfect instructions in Chilcotin—all the Déné languages are very hard of acquisition!—and he catechized without an interpreter to the apparent satisfaction of every one, when, early in August, 1885, that is, just after his return from Lhkacho, he received from Bishop D'Herbomez marching orders for Stuart Lake Mission, toward which he had never ceased to aspire.

His most cherished ambition was now to become a reality! Therefore he lost no time in hesitation or preparations, and, late in the evening of August 20, he reached the outlet of that beautiful lake, some two hundred and thirty miles north of William's Lake, slept among the Indians camped on an island for salmon fishing, and, on the morrow, was saying his first Mass in the country he has loved before, during, and after his stay therein.

He was now in the lake region of British Columbia. Stuart Lake is a picturesque sheet of water fifty miles long by six and a quarter in its greatest breadth, bordered north and south by real elongated mountains, not mere hills, with numerous bays, generally not very deep and dotted over with numberless islands, though vast expanses of free water contribute also to render it imposing to the visitor. Indeed, when you are a certain distance from its outlet you can see no shore, but have the very picture of the sea. Four Indian villages, the Mission, or Nakaztli, Pinche, Tache and Yekhuche,<sup>14</sup> nestle in nooks of its northern coast.

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<sup>14</sup> We do not pretend to give here, and elsewhere through this volume, anything like the proper aboriginal pronunciation of these terms. Type with the necessary diacritical marks is not available therefor.

Babine Lake, almost ten miles to the north and slightly to the west, is much longer and very deep, at least one hundred miles in length, but never very broad, and less peopled, counting only two regular, but rather large, villages, both of which are situated on its northern half. Both of these lakes are famous for the excellent trout they contain.

Then there are lakes Tatla, a fork-like piece of water to the north-east, on the shores of which there are no settled or permanent groups of natives; Tremblay, south of it, with one unimportant place, and, south of Stuart Lake, Fraser Lake with two villages, Natlēh and Stella, one at each end of it; St. Mary's Lake (*Tsistlatha*), with one, as well as lakes Loring, Dawson, Emérald and Morice, to mention only the principal, all of which are important bodies of water discovered by our missionary, and the last of which is probably the finest in British Columbia.

Lying quite out of the beaten tracks, none of these last contains any centre of population; but in Father Morice's time there was an important village at Fort George (to-day Prince George), as well as two at Stony Creek and the lake of which it is the outlet, which have since coalesced into one. Furthermore, within the Catholic territory, if we may so speak, there were, sixty miles west of the northern end of Babine Lake, the picturesque village of Rocher Déboulé (*Akwilgate*), and what was in course of time to become Moricetown, a little over thirty miles up the same river, the Bulkley, a tributary of the Skeena.

Finally, we should not forget to mention the nomadic hordes of Sékanais, or Rocky Mountain Indians,<sup>15</sup> a tribe absolutely devoid of all houses, let alone villages. They yearly rendezvous, and are

<sup>15</sup> More properly *Tsé-'kéh-né*, lit. Stones-on-People.

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visited by the priest, at McLeod's Lake, the very first post established within British Columbia, and, farther north, at Bear Lake, where stood the Fort Connolly of the early traders, without counting Fort Grahame, on the Finlay, which never had any church.

From a religious standpoint, there were, at the time of Father Morice's advent in the country, fourteen posts visited in rotation by the missionary and endowed with a small, and usually very poor, church, except the central one, built on land belonging to the Mission, and by the side of which had congregated a good-sized village with regular streets as among the whites. That church, a monument to Father Blanchet's memory, is still extant under a slightly improved form. It was even then quite decent, and large enough to receive a big congregation on the occasion of some of the greatest feast days of the year, especially as there were no pews in all the native churches.

Ethnographically speaking, three tribes claimed those fourteen places, together with a few minor outposts. They were the Babines, on the lake of the same name<sup>16</sup> and the Bulkley River, whose population then consisted of about 525 persons, 274 of whom lived on the lake and in its basin; the Sékanais, whose various bands, difficult to count because so nomadic, may have formed an aggregate of 380, if not more, counting those who frequented Fort Grahame but had no church, and the Carriers, the southernmost part of whom we have already visited, and who, all together,

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<sup>16</sup> So called because, from the time of puberty, their women wore between their lower teeth and lip a labret, or wooden plug, which most disgracefully exaggerated the size of the latter, giving them a "big lip," or babine, as said the French employees of the early traders.

it was estimated would make a total of some 1,600 souls.<sup>17</sup>

The district of the new incumbent of Stuart Lake Mission was therefore a most important one, especially if we consider that it did not comprise a single Protestant within its perimeter, and that each and every one of its inhabitants fell directly under the sway and action of our missionary. Neither must we omit to remark that some of the points to be visited were very far apart, and generally without any other means of communication than the waters of turbulent lakes and swift rivers, or very primitive trails, which in places could not be discovered save by the keen eye of the Indian.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Those Indians owe their name to the fact that, after the burning of a hunter's body, his widow formerly "carried" on her back, in a satchel of birch bark the little bones of her dead husband which had escaped the action of the flames.

<sup>18</sup> Of wagon roads there was not half a mile in the whole country, for the good reason that anything like a wheel vehicle was absolutely unknown therein. After a number of years only, ten miles of such public highway were built by the traders of the H. B. Co. between lakes Babine and Stuart, to cart the pelts and dried salmon from the post on the former to that of Fort St. James, on the latter.



IN THE NORTH



## CHAPTER III IN THE NORTH [1890-1900]

IT GOES without saying that Father Morice had to repeat on behalf of his new charge the linguistic studies through which he had gone for the benefit of the Chilcotins. The roots and most of the sounds were indeed the same, but the words often altogether different; so much so that when he appeared in Stuart Lake, he could not understand a single word of what his new flock was telling him. Yet, in the course of one year or so, he could converse in a way with them, without, of course, possessing even one-fiftieth of the language.

When he left, nineteen years later, he passed for knowing this better than the natives themselves,<sup>1</sup> and, despite the millions of words and over half a hundred varieties of verbs it boasts, the sense and nature of all of which had to be discovered, he has since compiled a monumental work, grammar and dictionary at the same time, not the one followed by the other, which is now being printed in Vienna, Austria.

The author of that wonderful work has often been

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<sup>1</sup> Which could naturally be said of a theoretical knowledge only, he writes us, meaning that the Indians realized that he was more familiar than any of them with its make-up and the reasons of its grammatical or syntactical peculiarities. As we write this, we happen to have before us two bits of paper on the question, the one written by one of their own chiefs and the other by a Mr. Robt. Watson, who had been charged to enquire of them about a difficult little point which was not quite clear in his mind. "It is our language, but you know it better than we do," expressly says the first (May 2, 1929), in a letter to Father Morice, while Mr. Watson's note, pencilled after an interview with the Indians, has it that "Louis Billy says Morice knows really better the language than he does himself."

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asked how he could have acquired without any printed aid all that knowledge; how he could have put down, classified and clearly defined all those words and found out and formulated the hundreds upon hundreds of rules which govern them. Of course, apart from his facility for learning languages, taste and labour must have been at the bottom of it all. He had to guess everything; but he did not do it in one or two, five or even ten years. After he had made a discovery, another would suddenly, and often quite unexpectedly, spring up in front of his wondering mind. It was mostly a subjective work of deduction on the part of the scholar.

For, as far as the natives themselves were concerned, few of them could be of any use to him. He would sometimes ask in broken French or English, when not in Carrier itself, how to say this or that. Without really grasping his meaning, the bystander would give him an expression which the priest would immediately and gratefully note down with the greatest care, and then use on the first occasion which presented itself. A roar of laughter would at times meet his use of the precious word so carefully recorded.

"What is the matter? Why do you laugh so?" he would then ask those present, who would answer: "If you only understood what you say! It's too funny for anything. You surely don't mean that."

"But you, Johnny, you gave me that word with the sense in which I now use it," the priest insisted, pointing to one of his hearers.

"By no means; you are mistaken. You did not write it down properly," would rejoin Mr. Indian, who would never admit his own negligence or ignorance in the presence of others.

"In this way," remarked Father Morice, "I learned

to speak well by making mistakes. Once I had been laughed at for a fault of language, you may be sure that I would never fall into that same error again."

One thing is certain. It was that mastery of the language he ultimately acquired which was to render him the king of the country, especially if we join that linguistic achievement to his great impartiality and his astonishing penetration of the Indian character as well as the instinctive sense he had of the probable results of a measure, or, of a direction on his people.

"It is surprising," would remark the late Bishop Durieu, incontestably the greatest missionary that ever lived on the Pacific coast, who reproduced at various points the marvels accomplished by the Jesuits in the Paraguay of old, "It is surprising how Father Morice follows me without knowing it. I never had him with me, I never taught him, and yet he acts with the Indians in exactly the same way as I do."

This avenue to success, the acquisition of languages and the intelligent manner in which he was treating his people, Morice has recorded in a page or two of his most important book, putting either to the credit of his episcopal superior. We have room for only a few passages.

The missionary who would succeed among the Indians, must aim higher in order to hit lower. Without doing too great violence to the principles of a sane theology, he must ask for more, sure as he is to obtain less. He requires a great steadiness of purpose, a continuity of direction free from all danger of self-contradiction. He must, in fact, forestall all possibility of hesitation or of doubt relatively to the legitimacy or opportuneness of such and such a measure, inasmuch as the native has a good memory, and his inborn astuteness would easily make him feel any contradiction, real or apparent, between the past and the present.

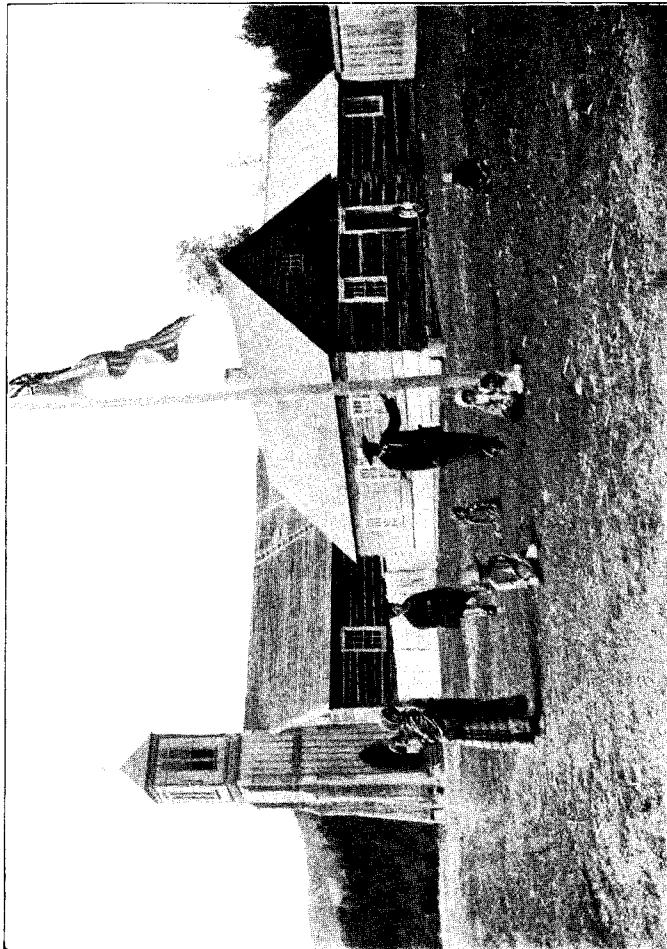
With him one must weigh everything, foresee all eventualities, realize beforehand the possible effect on his mind of this act, that advice, such and such a decision. For, once given, that decision cannot be repealed; once out, that order must ever stand good under pain of suggesting either indecision, therefore weakness, or even ignorance, which in a superior would do away with all respect on the part of the inferior . . . .

A man who can make a mistake has no right to command, according to the Indians.<sup>2</sup>

Another cause of Father Morice's wonderful influence over the natives was the fact that he did not feel satisfied with preaching the Gospel; he generously exemplified its precepts by his own private and public conduct, even to his own greatest discomfort. See, for instance, what he once did in order to impress on his people the absolute necessity of keeping holy the Lord's Day by attending church on the same. What follows happened before he was inured to the hard exercise of snowshoeing. After having travelled since the preceding Monday morning on the frozen expanses of Babine Lake and part of the adjoining forest, he had reached on a Friday night a point on the northern end of Lake Stuart, when his native companions declared they could not go one step farther. One of them had his feet frozen, they said, and the dogs could no longer be depended on to pull the party's baggage.

The missionary was in a quandary, for unless he reached that night a certain hut far enough from there, he could not think of getting to his central mission for the forthcoming Sunday. Moved by the fear to miss the usual religious services on the Lord's Day, he borrowed a pair of snowshoes from his Indians, and, in spite of their loud protests that he was sure to get

<sup>2</sup> Morice, *Histoire de l'Eglise Catholique dans l'Ouest Canadien*, vol. IV, p. 270; St. Boniface, 1923.



STUART LAKE MISSION

*(From photo taken shortly before 1960 by Father Monroe.)*



frozen, that a blizzard was approaching and that the snow was too deep even for them to proceed, he started alone and supperless in the darkness of a winter night.

Unused as he then was to this so fatiguing mode of travelling, he soon realized that he should have listened to the pleadings of his companions and made camp, instead of doing what was little short of tempting Providence. Each step he took would fill his foot-gear with snow, which would make it a task for him to stride on.

Then a hurricane, a terrible blizzard, arose, which would have caused him to lose his bearings had he not been careful to follow closely the shore line. The wind would howl piteously through the pines, the rocks split with loud reports through the intensity of the cold, and the squalls whipped the poor wayfarer's face with fine falling snow, until he was forced to avow himself vanquished by the elements. He was now reduced to such a state of helplessness that he had to use his hands to lift up his feet and trudge on. Though in great danger of freezing if he stopped one moment in the midst of the storm, he had to take off his snowshoes and lie thereon, expecting death (which would have infallibly come to him if he had then fallen asleep) or the help of the Almighty.

The latter came to him in the shape of a path hidden under the recent snow which he was lucky enough to find. After having rested a while, he followed it very cautiously until he reached the hut for which he was making. The inmates were reciting their morning prayers when he arrived. His chin and some of his fingers were frost-bitten; but he did reach his headquarters at the other end of the lake that Saturday evening. And he felt happy, though the terrible

exertion of that fateful night confined him to his room for weeks thereafter.<sup>3</sup>

Of the three tribes under Father Morice, the most advanced because the most progressive was incontestably that of the Carriers, from the double standpoint of religion and civilization. Thanks to the good work done by his predecessor, Father Jean-Marie Lejacq, O.M.I., the new incumbent found his task among them somewhat facilitated. Apart from some laggards, slothful characters such as you find almost everywhere, their people were baptized, though they had, of course, still much to learn, while the minds of the older generation were not yet entirely free from all dread of the medicine-man, or sorcerer. Nevertheless, it might almost be said that, in that tribe, the most difficult part of the missionary's work was to keep every one in the right path, from which their depraved nature was constantly prompting them to swerve. Keeping people in the right path is a much more difficult feat than putting them into it.

The Carrier is full of good intentions and is docile enough to him who has won his esteem; but, like most aborigines living in more or less important agglomerations, he is weak before temptation, and questions of sexual morality, for instance, are but too often a thorn in the side of his pastor.

The Sékanais are a quite different type: the unspoiled children of the mountains, pure as the air of their fastnesses. As they are always on the move in quest of venison game, and as, on the other hand, they travel in groups of related individuals, breaches of morals are almost unheard of among them. They are hard to reach, however, and, like all primitives, they are great gamblers and not a little superstitious.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Father Morice*, by Dr. T. O'Hagan, pp. 24-27.

It would be difficult to imagine a set of simpler, more unsophisticated and honest people. As Father Morice has written in one of his earliest works, among the Tsé'kéhnê "a trader will sometimes go on a trapping expedition leaving his store unlocked, without fear of any of its contents going amiss. Meanwhile, a native may call in his absence, help himself to as much powder and shot or any other item as he may need; but he will never fail to leave there an exact equivalent in furs."<sup>4</sup>

As to the Babines, they are much less pliant and more conservative of their old ways than the two aforesaid tribes. Because of their proximity to natives of Tsimian parentage, who, in course of time, have lent them most of their ancestral customs, they are very much attached thereto—which means for Catholics very difficult to convert to real Christianity.

While they respect the priest, nay, entertain for him a fear akin to superstition, as they deem him some sort of a higher medicine-man, they would not do away with their own jugglers, or sorcerers, were passionately fond of the potlatch<sup>5</sup> and concomitant evils, and, as to morality, they too often would adhere to a woman only as long as they did not meet one more suited to their taste. It is useless to say that such dispositions were not much conducive to the tenets and ethics of the Christian religion. Hence incessant battling and fighting and thundering on the part of our missionary. On the occasion of his visits, they would indeed promise all he wanted, but forgot their word as soon as he had turned his back.

Things went on without much amelioration for quite a few years, until his superior, the Rt. Rev. Bishop

<sup>4</sup> *Notes archaeological, industrial and sociological on the Western Dénés*, p. 19; Toronto, 1893.

<sup>5</sup> For an explanation of this famous public feast see Chapter VI.

D'Herbomez, tired of seeing his representative practically derided by people who wanted to serve two masters, and were unprofitably appropriating to themselves a precious time which could have been bestowed on better disposed tribes, instructed Father Morice to give them a last trial, failing which they were to be left to themselves.

Therefore, one day in July, when he knew that they had prepared a potlatch to be given immediately after his departure, the priest communicated the serious episcopal ultimatum to the Babines gathered for the bi-annual retreat, or mission.

"It is up to you to show whether you want to be real Christians or remain practically pagans, as you are despite my efforts to set you right in the eyes of God," he declared. "I am going to ascertain this by passing on and going to the Rocher Déboulé.<sup>6</sup> If, when I come back, you have abstained from potlatching, I shall stay with you and give you the usual retreat exercises. If not, I shall then return home and leave you to your deviltries."

These words, uttered as solemnly as possible, made a mighty impression on the natives, yet not mighty enough to deter them from indulging in the contemplated potlatch. Of this their pastor was soon informed by his friends and secret agents, and on his way back he told them that, since they did not want to become real Christians, he was going home and would return to them only when they were determined to serve only one master, the One-who-sits-in-the-Sky.

Dumbfounded at first, yet kept silent by the sanctity of the place where that declaration was made, the Indians had no sooner gone out of the church than they broke out into a torrent of vituperation and

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<sup>6</sup> Sixty miles west, and beyond the Babine mountains.

abuse, not indeed against the priest, but against the unknown one who had given him his information. Yet their chief forbade any one to lend Father Morice a canoe for his return, and declared that they would see to it that no Babine accompanied him on his way home, threatening dire vengeance on any one who should dare run counter to that ukase.

Fortunately, the priest had espied in the village three Carriers who were there on a visit. By dint of coaxing and extolling them above those bastard Christians they had come to see, he persuaded them to take him home in their own canoe.

Two or three years then elapsed without the Babines receiving the visit of the missionary. Of course, were it only out of rage at being abandoned, they then fell into all kinds of disorders: gambling increased and pagan practices were resumed on a larger scale; a man would leave his wife to take another as passion would dictate; so much so indeed that, after a while, it was hard to say who was this or that man's legitimate partner. Two of their former Christian practices, however, they never relinquished: Friday abstinence and the daily public recitation in the church of the morning and evening prayers their spiritual guide had always insisted on.

After a time it came to pass that one of their petty chiefs,<sup>7</sup> who, for a wonder, had been baptized in childhood, fell dangerously sick and sent for the priest in order to get reconciled to his God. Father Morice hurried as much as he could, and covered in five days the one hundred and sixty miles which separated him from his northern patient. But when he arrived, the latter had just expired.

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<sup>7</sup> Or hereditary landowners, those to whom belong the various portions of the hunting grounds of the tribe.

This was a sad blow to the priest, as well as a significant warning to others; but, seeing in the very fact of his return among the Babines a secret design of Providence on the tribe, he announced that he was forthwith to commence the series of preachings and other exercises called a retreat. The faction of the "Devil's clan," or those who were averse to listening to religious instructions, took this for a signal to resume their anti-Christian operations. They set upon beating their drums, and invited their fellow men to gamble and dance, as a protest against the priest's intentions. The latter took great care not to mind the provocation, but completely ignored it.

By dint of kind words and sermons which he endeavoured to render as interesting as possible, he had the happiness of seeing his audience increase every day, until, at the end of the retreat, he had quite a good majority, if not almost the totality of his flock in the church again. Then came the usual routine of settling the people's social difficulties and of eradicating the public disorders which had been obtaining since the last retreat. This meant the separation of couples unduly united and the returning to their husbands of the women who had violated their marriage vows, as well as the atoning for the same by a salutary penance.

By means of the organization obtaining in all of Father Morice's villages,<sup>8</sup> all went well enough until

<sup>8</sup> The chief orders, and in a vague way replaces the priest in his absence, giving, just out of the local church, short and sometimes eloquent exhortations in confirmation of what the missionary may have said inside, or taking his place, always at the door of the sacred edifice on the Sundays when he is not there; the captains are the ministers of the whip, which they administer to those who ask for it or are condemned to receive it by the chief acting as lay magistrate, while the watchmen's role is to conform to the function expressed by their name, and the soldiers act as policemen or constables, fetching the accused to the chief and council and keeping watch over the condemned culprits, that is filling towards them the part of jailers.

late in the evening of that last day but one. Then the head chief, who had been working hard on those lines with his council, came to tell the missionary, just as he was retiring after an exceptionally hard day's work, that he could do nothing with François, who refused to take back Marianne to whom he was legally married, and asked that the priest himself try his hand at the job of bringing him to more Christian sentiments.

The latter was terribly tired and sleepy; but how could he refuse? He called to himself the recalcitrant party, to whom he spoke as convincingly as he could, reminded him that, contrary to the bulk of the Babine tribe, he was baptized and legally married, even according to the law of the whites; recalled to his mind the good he had done and the happiness he had experienced when, in former years, he had been acting as the right arm of the priest, and, bringing up the question of the premature death without the consolations of religion of the petty chief who had brought in his pastor, seriously admonished him not to deserve such an unfortunate end. Finally, the culprit, who had all this while been on his knees, took the hand of his exhorter and promised to do what he was told.

At about two a.m., as the priest was sleeping soundly, he was suddenly awakened by the excited shouting of a woman outside, who was vigorously shaking the door of his unfinished cabin by the edge of the forest, and endeavoured to break it open. At the same time, the female intruder was crying out:

“Patrick, come out quick. They are coming to kill the priest; they may kill you with him!”

It was the mother of a boy whom Father Morice kept according to custom, sleeping in his shack at night. At the same time, it seemed as if, some distance off, all the furies of hell had been set loose and

were holding a perfect pandemonium by the shore of the lake. You must know the Babines' capacity for shouting and screaming and creating uproars to have an idea of the terrible scene that was now on.

"What is the matter?" asked Father Morice without getting up.

"Why? Don't you know?" exclaimed the boy's mother outside. "The woman you took away from François last evening, seeing that she was abandoned by her paramour, went out and hanged herself in the wood. Her people and those of her clan have seized their rifles, and are now attempting to come and kill you, whom they hold responsible for her death."

The priest took in at once his position: he was to fall a martyr to the indissolubility of the marriage tie!

Yet he assures us that he did not fear: he felt he had done nothing but his duty, and he put himself in God's hands. His fate, humanly speaking, depended on the bravery and constancy of his friends who were endeavouring to repulse the aggressors. They were much more numerous than the latter, but it is well known that, especially among the Indians, a few unscrupulous individuals, a handful of desperate characters, can, when properly excited, overpower and awe very many quiet ones who try to stop them without hurting anybody.

Finally, after waves of uproarious sound which were swelling on as the would-be murderers gained the ascendancy and were approaching the priest's cabin, nature claimed her own and Father Morice fell asleep. When he woke up, do you know what he learned? The virago who was the cause of the whole trouble had only feigned to go and hang herself, in order to have her revenge on the priest. In the morning she was found crouching under an old bed!

Of course, Father Morice did not have everywhere such dangerous experiences; but as he constantly showed himself fearless when the fulfilment of a duty was at stake, affairs due to the Indians' general fickleness in love matters too often resulted in disagreeable difficulties, wherefrom, however, he always turned up the victor. To have once yielded to passion would have practically destroyed forever his power for good.

Even among the meeker and more reasonable Carriers, his life was once in danger, because he had persuaded a woman who was living in sin to put an end to the scandal. Her guilty partner, a stalwart man who was no other than the brother of the Stony Creek chief, but had never been deemed a fit subject for baptism, followed the priest into the wood and would probably have fired at him if he had not been accompanied by two Indians, who would have thereby been put in danger of their lives. We cannot but repeat it: take away all the difficulties arising out of unholy sexual relations among the natives, and their pastor's task will be immensely facilitated.

While we are on the chapter of woman among them, we may as well remark that the new missionary of the Carriers had to do a great deal in order to lift up her condition, not only from a religious and moral standpoint, but also as regards civilization as well, which second aspect is often the result of the first. With most Indian tribes, and the Dénés of Northern British Columbia form no exception to the rule, woman is not the companion, or equal, of man, and the queen of the home as with us, but a servant, a drudge and almost a slave, who will never dare eat with her lord and master and who, when on the wing, is the perfect beast of burden of the whole family.

No reader who has not seen them can realize the

loads she is then made to carry—sometimes twice as big as herself—while her husband toddles along with nothing on his back but his game-bag, if he is considerate enough to carry it (an exceptional case), and his gun in his arms. Arrived at the camping place after having packed all day most of the family impedimenta—blankets and cooking implements, the necessary tools and baskets—it is upon her that all the work devolves.\*

Has the huntsman succeeded in knocking down some of the larger game while the wife has stayed at home? He will leave it where he shot it and go home, taking care, as he goes along, to leave in the bush or on the trees some marks of his passage, and tell his wife:

“In such and such a part of the forest, I have killed a caribou, or a moose, etc. Go for it.”

As it is for venison, so was it originally for that great requisite of the long northern winters, fire-wood, which is in all the greater demand as the Indian never sleeps in more than one blanket, whatever may be the temperature. The husband would fell trees, cut their trunks into the proper lengths, about five feet and a half, and tell his wife to go for them. Her lot was then to pack them home, two or three at a time, sometimes more. In the beginning of Father Morice's stay at Stuart Lake, this was a daily exercise, the propriety of which was accepted by everybody and which was seen practised on all sides.

The accidents, maiming and disabling of the women consequent on such exertions, should have led the men to abolish, or at least mitigate, such a custom. But who would have ever thought of that? Is not woman

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\* It may be added by way of a slight attenuation that, among the Dénés of the north, even the dogs are made to pack such small, and generally hard, objects as are proportioned to their size.

made for packing as the birds for flying? The pastor of Carriers and Babines did not share that opinion, and never let an opportunity pass without showing it. He did at first meet opposition, mostly underhand and passive, but at times quite open and explicit. One of the interested parties, a strong and able-bodied man, did not shrink from giving him in this connection what he thought a good lesson in logic.

"You should be consequent with yourself," he remarked. "Did you not tell us many times that in a family it is the father who is the master? Now, if he is the master, why should he work? Can one be at the same time boss and workman?"

Then, in a knowing way:

"It suffices to look at a woman's build to realize that He-who-sits-on-the-Sky made her to carry burdens; is it not clear that her great breadth between the hips is intended to receive loads?"

The native philosopher believed it, and chuckled over what he deemed his triumph. But as he could not persuade his spiritual guide of the cogency of his reasoning, and as the latter meant to be obeyed, he would occasionally sally out himself after the women he considered overloaded, and reproach them for the little regard they evidenced for his protestations. The poor creatures would, of course, concur in his opinion, but often whispered if nobody was within hearing distance:

"If I don't do it, he will beat me."

No use asking who *He* was. A squaw will never say: "My husband"; it is against good manners.<sup>10</sup>

By dint of endless remonstrances, firmness allied to kindness, the missionary finally gained his point, or at least greatly improved the fate of women in this

<sup>10</sup> She will say instead: that one, or so and so's father.

connection, not only at Stuart Lake, where his action was, of course, more powerful because his vigilance more incessant, but even throughout his whole district.

Woman, by herself, could never have bettered her own condition. She had been so long kept in the strictest subjection that she had come to possess but the meanest possible opinion of her own kind. Unless she was the heir to a landed title, which sometimes happened when males were not available in the proper line of succession, she had in ceremonious banquets to share the part of the lodge reserved for dogs, the doorway and near it; she could not claim any social right in the tribe, was not admitted to proffer an opinion or give advice.

When absorbed in his linguistic studies, a difficulty would at times arise in Father Morice's mind, which would prevent his going on with his writing. He would then rush out and try to elucidate it with the help of the first person he would meet. Should that one be a woman, she would stare at him in a silly and wondering way, and remark:

"How could you think of asking me that? I am nothing but a woman."

Supposedly possessed of no linguistic knowledge, courage would, of course, be just as foreign to her make-up. Truth to tell, few Carriers or Babines could normally boast anything like bravery. In a paroxysm of anger, they could, like big children that they are, do almost anything, go to the most unlikely excesses, but when not excited by passion, they were the most pusillanimous pieces of humanity that could be dreamt of.

In common with other northern Dénés, they even formerly had periodical fits of unreasonable fear or phobia, the object of which was usually an absent,

unknown and, as they thought, noxiously inclined people, strangers who were heard or seen but never brought to bay.

Father Morice was one evening busy at his work table and night was well on when two women came in, out of breath with fear, who told him that a Babine named *Hol*, who had lost a nephew he dearly loved,<sup>11</sup> was roaming about the outskirts of the village, evidently bent upon avenging on them the death of his beloved one.<sup>12</sup>

"Impossible," objected the priest; "Hol must at this moment be at least one hundred and sixty miles from here."

"He is close to the village," they persistently asserted. "He is there . . . we have heard him, so and so has seen him. He is after our lives."

What is the use of reasoning with fear? To get rid of the women, the priest went out with them and asked them:

"Now, where did you hear him?"

"Right there, not far from here," they said. "He is in hiding to do us to death."

"Then let us go there, and realize yourselves that you are mistaken."

Others then joined the trio, all with the same story. Of course, no stranger, let alone would-be murderer, could be found anywhere, and Father Morice, thinking that the women must by this time be convinced of their error, rebuked them, saying:

"Now I hope you will not disturb me any more with your idle tales."

<sup>11</sup> Owing to the matrilineal system of those Indians, maternal nephews are much dearer to men than their own sons, because the latter belong to a different clan, that of their mother.

<sup>12</sup> Such murders were formerly fairly common.

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"But he is there; he is surely hiding, all the better to pounce upon us afterwards," they pitifully cried out.

Then, turning towards the forest, one of them addressed in pleading tones the imaginary visitor:

"Pray, do not harm us; we never did you anything," she loudly whined. "Come rather to us, and we will give you whatever you may fancy."

Disgusted with such uncalled-for dread, Father Morice left them to harangue the air and returned to his work.

Women, mere women, you may say. Yes, but under the circumstances men would have done quite as much.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*, pp. 63, 64.

WITH BRUTES



## CHAPTER IV

### WITH BRUTES

[1890-1900]

**O**F COURSE, with the number of posts under him, it would not have been practical for Father Morice to hold missions, or revivals, in every little village. The natives of a region would generally congregate in one of the chief places blessed with a sufficiently large church, and there benefit by the ministrations of the priest. Such were, south of Stuart Lake, Natléh, the village near Fort Fraser, where he repaired three times a year; Fort George, which he visited twice during the same lapse of time, and Stony Creek, the inhabitants of which gathered every fall at Fraser Lake, where they improved their opportunity to make their yearly provision of salmon.

Salmon was then, and remained some time after, the staple food, the daily bread, of both Carriers and Babines, while the Sékanais, either from sheer necessity or from tribal dislike, despised fish and lived on venison. Solid weirs were made to bar off the outlets of those lakes to which salmon were going to spawn, and the fish was caught every morning by the thousand through traps connected with openings in the weir, whereto the former had access but wherefrom there was no escape.

The women would cut the fish open in such a way as to produce four thin slices, which were spread out and exposed to the action of air and smoke. After which the whole stock, which to the Indian represented the year's harvest, was housed in aerial caches to which

vermin and minor rodents could not climb. On this the Carriers and Babines would thenceforth live as we do on bread, having, for an occasional change, a few potatoes grown in patches redeemed from the forest, fresh fish from the lake or river, venison, berries, and pine sap shaved off the tree trunk in thin ribbons, with a special bone implement which always accompanied women on the move.

We have mentioned venison. By this we mean the flesh not only of caribou and moose, which could be procured only at a distance from beaten tracks, on or near the mountains, whereon the hunters roamed for weeks at a time, but that of the black bear, whose pelt was no less precious than the meat serviceable. In several regions the coarse flesh of the grizzly, which only an Indian can eat, that of the beaver, almost the staple food on Fridays, that of the porcupine, the gourmet's part of which is the tail, that of the marmot, good when fresh but which does not keep, and that of the lynx, which the women abhorred out of a superstitious fear based on a legend in which Master Lynx is made to play a rôle repugnant to the fair sex, are the chief food of the tribes.

Bears are plentiful in the north, so much so indeed that Father Morice called his first book *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*, "In the Land of the Black Bear."<sup>1</sup> Those animals were, in the course of his many journeys, at times a source of danger, but more often the object of a most welcome encounter.

Our friend was once descending the Fraser at the

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<sup>1</sup> Strange to say, those black bears, in Indian *ses*, are sometimes brown, as a brown cub may occasionally be seen in the same litter as a black one. Father Morice has seen cases of this. Yet the former must not be confounded with the cinnamon bear, another species, much less with the grizzly. To the natives, that brown bear is merely a black bear, *ses*, which happens to be accidentally "red," *tel'ken*.

time of the spring freshets, that is, when the river is very high and its waters turbulent, when a black object was sighted some distance down, which seemed to be going across the river. His companions were not slow in recognizing in it an enormous bear which was making for the opposite side. A broad smile hovered over their lips: on the water he was powerless and could not escape!

When but a short distance from him, they had their first shot at him. Down went his head in the water, which immediately changed to the colour of blood. By this time, the canoe had floated down by the side of the brute, which was just close to Father Morice.

"*Ilhchoot! ilhchoot! au'êt thénthîllelh*, take him, seize him, he is going to sink," cried his companions.

The priest had never been so near a bear. For that reason he was rather hesitating; but, on the reiterated cries of the Indians, he stretched out his hand to seize the animal, when, lo! in a flash the bear directed at him a vicious snap of his jaws! He was anything but dead, and, in the state of rage in which he was,<sup>2</sup> if the beast had reached but a little farther, he would have grabbed the hand and caused priest and crew to capsize with their craft.

There is in Northern British Columbia something else than black bears which one is justified to fear, nay, to avoid. A black bear no real Déné hunter fears, and numerous are the Carriers who have had hand to hand fights with him out of which the animal came second best, though the man had to pay for his victory with painful wounds, resulting in terrible scars of life-long duration. Father Morice has seen several cases

<sup>2</sup> So enraged was he that he attacked the canoe itself, and sank his teeth right through the sheet iron which had been made to protect its prow against accidents.

of such. He is even ready to give, free of charge, the native recipe against receiving mortal wounds in those encounters. As soon as a black bear you thought dead jumps at you, be careful to seize his ears and keep his mouth away from your face, neck and chest! Here we have the classical *teneo lupum auribus*<sup>3</sup> with the change of one single word.

Black bears, therefore, are to the Indian something like the means of qualifying for the diploma of hunter. This is not so with the grizzly, which to the Indian is not a bear, but a most ferocious animal of another kind. This is shunned by all sensible people, unless they are well armed, in company, or exceptionally cool.

Shall we now furnish the reader with something concerning the "manners and customs" of that monster such as our friend personally noticed? We find in one of his geographical papers<sup>4</sup> an account of some experiences in this respect a brief outline of which may prove seasonable, since we have undertaken to speak mostly of brutes in this chapter.

We are on a 16th of September, near the western end of a dark-water lake called St. Mary's, or *Tsislatha*. Father Morice and crew have not seen anybody for days as they travel in their little canoe. All the greater reason for repairing to the northern shore, where clouds of smoke are noticed. Quite a crowd of squaws are there, but not one man is to be seen on the flat where they dry up for the winter the berries they have just collected.

"Where are the men?" the travellers ask as soon as they get within speaking distance.

"The men? Why, don't you know the news?"

<sup>3</sup> "I hold the wolf by the ears."

<sup>4</sup> *Du Lac Stuart à l'Océan Pacifique*, pp. 30-34; Neufchâtel (Switzerland), 1904.

cry out at one and the same time half a dozen women, each of whom vies with her neighbour in shouting.

"What news? We are travelling; how could we guess what happens in these remote parts?"

"Something awful we call it, and that is why our men are away. That was terrible! Oh! the poor boy, he must indeed be endowed with magic powers," precipitately remark the women, all of whom insist upon having their say in the matter.

"But what is it? Now, you, Julie, tell us, and let the others keep their peace," orders the priest.

It requires all the authority of the missionary to prevent the others from talking at the same time and making things unintelligible. By dint of careful listening, this is what the travelling party learns.

Not far from the point just reached, at the outlet of a small lake, a few hunters were sleeping under a tent when, early in the morning, one of them, a young man named Charlie, was awakened by the honks of a passing flock of wild geese. Looking up, he perceived on the brow of a grassy hill beyond the little river what his experienced eye at once recognized as a genuine grizzly bear. Desirous of having all the glory of the deed for himself, instead of sharing it with his two companions, Charlie did not wake them up as he should have done, but immediately crossed the creek, lifted up his hand in the air as all hunters do to ascertain whence the breeze came, so as to govern himself accordingly,<sup>5</sup> and, by a round-about way approached the monster, unseen. Then he sent him a first bullet from his Winchester.

But so excited was he that in the reloading the key

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<sup>5</sup> As bears have such a keen hearing and smell, they are always careful lest the breeze should carry to the game the sound of their footsteps and the odour of their own person.

of the gun stuck! It would not work! This spelt death to him; for what is a single ball to a grizzly, even in the heart?<sup>6</sup>

Unable to reload his arm, the rash fellow could do nothing but rush away as fast as his legs would carry him, with the enraged beast upon his heels. Then, thinking in his distress of finding some kind of precarious protection in a big stump which emerged from the prairie, he started to run around it, keeping it always between himself and his would-be executioner, when, dizzy and frightened, he tumbled down and, at the same moment was belaboured by the growling fury which, with its terrible claws, ploughed bloody furrows into his breast, cut off his nose, broke his arms, tearing off one of his hands, until the poor man having ceased to give any sign of life, the brute imagined that he had done him to death, and left him a bloody mass of flesh and broken bones.

Yet the man survived! What wonder, then, if his fellow Indians were wondering whether he was not possessed of magic powers?

It was on a Saturday that Father Morice and crew learnt of this. They spent the Sunday in the hut of a good old soul, an Indian called *Nelli*, and the following Monday afternoon saw them on the clear waters of Cambie Lake. The next day, September 19, the weather was simply perfect, and the azure of the skies seemed to be mirrored in the beautiful sheet of water, over which the missionary party was peacefully gliding, when their canoe slowed down and the priest, who happened to be resting in the middle of the little craft,

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<sup>6</sup> One of them is known to have survived twenty minutes and swum half a mile after having received ten bullets in its body, four of which had transpierced its lungs and two had gone into its heart (Art. "Bear" in *American Encyclopedia*).

heard his men having some kind of a friendly discussion.

"It is a rock, I tell you," one would say.

"No; it moves. Look, it is coming towards us," contended the other.

"What is it?" asked Father Morice.

"We do not know. Can you see yonder speck on the water some distance from the shore?" queried John *Stené*.

"I see nothing at all."

"Then you might look with your spy glass?"

The priest took up an old field glass which had been lent him by a kind Hudson's Bay Company man, and directed it towards the object in question, but because of the oscillations of the little canoe, could not see anything. He then handed it to one of his crew, who immediately exclaimed:

"Great heavens! it is a grizzly bear, and it swims towards us, making evidently for yonder mountain, where he must have its lair. That is the season for those brutes to prepare their winter quarters."

"Let us go on; let us flee, quick!" then cried out Thomas *Thautilh*, who was not extra brave, especially against grizzly bears.

"No, no, don't listen to him," said Father Morice. "For a long time I have wished to see a grizzly close at hand. Now that I am going to have one, I am not going to run away from him."

"But you don't know the wiles of those ferocious beasts," insisted peaceful Thomas. "When they sight a canoe with people in, they dive and make for it under water, then cause it to capsize."

"We shall not give this one time to do that," assured the missionary.

Thus even Thomas had, much against his will, to

be a party to what he considered little short of suicide. When the monster, which had never as much as suspected the presence of the travellers lying in wait for him, was at the proper distance, John stood up in the frail craft and fired.

"Too high!" cried out the two other Indians.<sup>7</sup>

At the same moment, the brute sent forth an unearthly growl. In one bound, just as if he had been on the ground, he rose up in the air, squatted on his posterior as if surveying the situation, and his arms immediately did the act of grasping a prey. Then, having perceived the enemy, he started vigorously to swim towards him.

Another shot: too low this time!<sup>8</sup>

"Let us go! let us go!" entreated Thomas.

But the priest was obdurate. He would not think of such a thing. Faithful John sent out a third bullet; the beast lowered his big long head into the water, now blood red.

"Hurrah! let us catch him," exclaimed Father Morice.

"Wait, do wait," protested his crew. "A grizzly is not killed because his brains happen to have been visited by a bullet,"<sup>9</sup> they remarked.

As a matter of fact, in a few seconds the monster had lifted up his awful grinning mug, and was madly beating the water with his terrible paws and furiously making for his assailants. But from the irregularity of his movements it was evident that John's shot had blinded him, and that he did no longer know where to

<sup>7</sup> Will it be believed that the Indians profess to see a bullet in transit through the air? At any rate, they always tell you where or what it hit.

<sup>8</sup> The oscillations of the small craft rendered it impossible to take a steady aim.

<sup>9</sup> In the present case, the projectile had gone through one ear and got out of the other.

go to satisfy his vengeance. So John had full opportunities to lodge a few more bullets into his carcass, after which he was towed ashore. Without counting his tail, the animal proved to be exactly seven feet four inches in length.

It is a far cry from a grizzly to a grouse, and perhaps we should pass over the little occurrence we have in mind, were it not that our missionary had then more to suffer from the grouse than he had previously from the grizzly. Moreover, whilst we are on the theme: "with brutes," why be shy of another happening caused by a denizen of the forest? If you will have an adequate idea of Father Morice's life in the wilds of the North, you may as well be told of the dangers he ran there, even should these have been of a seemingly trivial nature.

Furthermore, the reader may like to learn how, in any circumstance, an encounter with a grouse can have more serious consequences than one with a grizzly. Of course, the poor harmless little creature could not of itself have hurt anybody, and the puzzle must be explained.

On his way to Fort McLeod, where he was to evangelize the Sékanais, Father Morice, with two companions and an embryo pack-train, had reached a most rocky part of the wood, where it would have been cruel to ride one's horse because of the many stones on the way. As he was trudging on foot along the narrow path, the priest espied quite close a grouse perched in a tree which seemed an excellent target for a shot and promised a succulent meal for the evening.

Being unarmed, he shouted to Joseph Prince, perhaps a hundred yards ahead:

"Bring me your little gun."

The Indian had with him an old rusty pistol of very large calibre. Meanwhile, the grouse was getting

restless, and seemed not to relish at all the amount of attention of which it was the object. It had already made repeated attempts at flying off when, oblivious for that reason of the fact that he was handling a pistol, not a gun with a butt-end to shoulder as a precaution against the impetus of the recoil, the wayfarer carefully aimed and fired.

Heavens! what could it be? Had a peal of thunder exploded through his brains? A terrific uproar seemed suddenly to have deafened him. His companion would speak to him: he saw his lips move, but did not hear a single sound. In answer to a sign from the latter, he took his hand to his right eye and withdrew it full of blood, which was now flowing down his cheek.

Again what could it be? The reader who knows anything about fire-arms must have guessed that this was all the result of the recoil of the pistol, whose hammer had struck the facial bone just below the eye! Now, in this particular case (and Father Morice quotes that circumstance as one of three or four when he happened to be just on the verge of personal disaster), that pistol hammer struck him with all the force of a 44-calibre gun not more than one-eighth of an inch below the eye!

Gratefully recalling the protection of Providence in his dangerous distraction, he uses to add that his grouse cost him enough to allow him the satisfaction of remarking that his bullet cut its neck asunder.

Other cases of great danger averted just in the nick of time could be cited, in which our missionary sees the effect of a special protection of the Almighty. We prefer to show, through another experience of his, how good can come out of evil, how even normally hurtful beings can indirectly come to the help of man

in distress. We all know the story of the spider which, by weaving its web at the entrance of a cavern, protected a fugitive prince from his enemies; we will now see how mosquitoes once saved our friend's life.

He was with two Indians painfully poling up (see illustration), with an empty stomach, the Driftwood River, which meanders through the willows of its low banks from the mountains in the vicinity of Bear Lake, where he was going for the benefit of the Sékanais who periodically congregate there. Counting on the usual chance game met with in the course of such long and slow journeys,<sup>10</sup> he had taken too scanty a stock of provisions, and these had long been spent between his men and himself. They were far from their destination, and the trio was becoming rather despondent, as all kinds of game, even to rabbits and grouse, which, to a famished Indian, represent severally but one mouthful or two, seemed to have fled away from the path of the wayfarers. The canoeists were hungry, the priest himself not having eaten a crumb for what seemed an age. They looked and looked through the bush, but could see no animated being, when, of a sudden, the Indian who was standing<sup>11</sup> in front squatted down, took off his headgear, and, turning to the priest, said in a low voice:

"*Hwez hwonilh'ēn*, look there," pointing at the same time to a certain point ahead.

Father Morice looked where he was told, and saw nothing but the willows, whose tops, strangely enough on a July day without a breeze, seemed to stir in a

<sup>10</sup> It is about 220 miles between Stuart Lake Mission and the site of old Fort Connolly.

<sup>11</sup> Poling is, of course, done standing in the canoe, which is made to advance by one of the crew pressing on the hard bottom the end of his long pole in a slanting direction, until almost the whole of it goes down, at the same time as another withdraws his own preparatory to going through the same operation.

way which the white man could not understand, but by which the Indian guessed the presence of some animated force acting as a motor. Presently a black bear, pursued by a cloud of mosquitoes, emerged from the forest and jumped into the water.

"Hurrah!" cried out the priest, "fire and don't miss him."

"Impossible," answered his companion, "it is too far."

And, after having enjoyed a good bath and freed himself of his enemies, the mosquitoes, Bruin sprang ashore and disappeared in the bush.

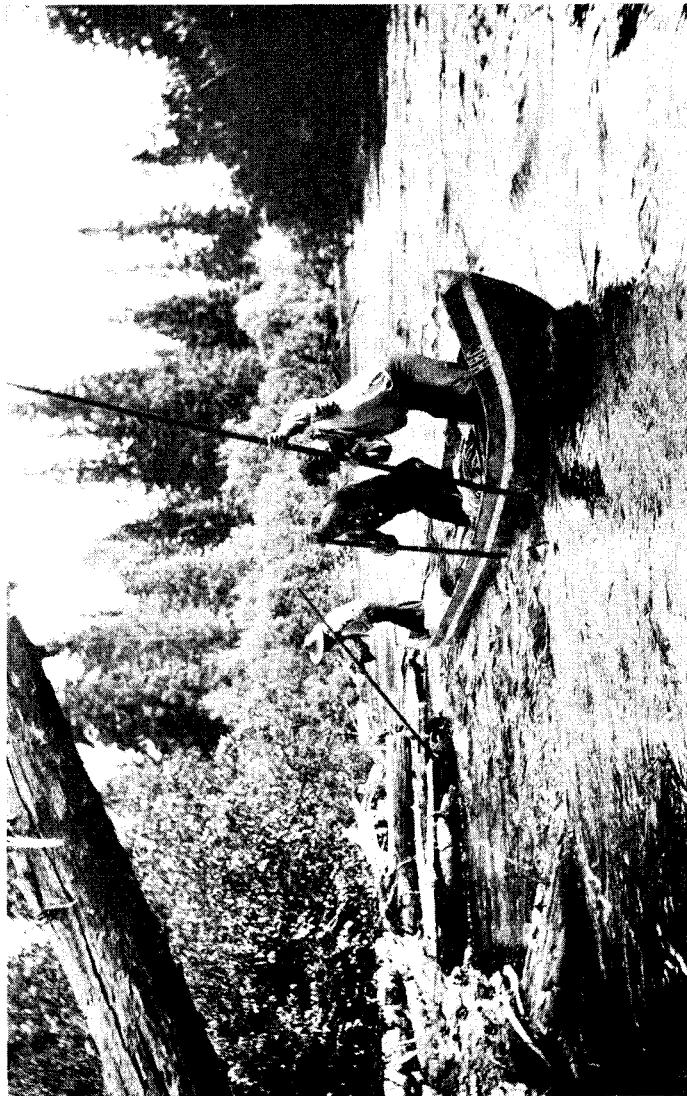
"Is not that too bad! What a good meal we have lost!" sadly ejaculated the starving priest.

But it was not over, and the Indians knew it. The pests which had been tormenting the brute and had forced him into the water were soon at work again. To get rid of them, the bear thought of another expedient. Having espied a tall poplar rising quite close to the water and in front of the travellers at a standstill in the shallow stream, it immediately set upon climbing it.

"Bang! bang!" went Hobel's (Robert's) rifle, and down tumbled the wild beast, dead!

"Don't you see," remarks the retired missionary to-day, "the brute would not have come to the water, or, if it had, it would have plunged back into the depths of the forest, and we would have starved to death, if it had not been for the mosquitoes!" The appearance of the beast in the path of our friend could not have been more providential, and a little incident which happened in the afternoon of the same day served clearly to demonstrate that the encounter of the morning had been a real godsend.

As the trio, now restored to life and good humour



*Photo by F. C. Sisquarrell, L.S.*

POLING UP THE DRIFTWOOD RIVER



by a copious dinner, were going up the stream, they almost came nose to nose with another bear which seemed to defy them, crossing the river only a few yards ahead of the canoemen. The Indian cannot restrain himself at the sight of game, and though they now had their small canoe full of meat, one of Father Morice's crew, Duncan Paquette, a half-breed brought up and living as a native, could not help seizing his rifle to kill the new prey. It was the same old story, however. As he tried to eject the shell which he had allowed to remain in the magazine and put a cartridge in position for firing, something caught up against the lever, which refused to work, while Bruin was majestically passing on. In despair, Duncan snatched up an old pistol, which was lying in the canoe, and made with it for the bear. But this was now too far.

"You see," then moralized the priest, "this morning we were in need of food and the Almighty sent us some. This afternoon, we have plenty, and the Same has not allowed us to waste the animal which has just passed us. He keeps it for parties that may really need it."

It will be seen by the foregoing that our missionary's travels were often by water. But to reach the Sékanais of McLeod's Lake, in the east, as well as to go to Fraser Lake, Stony Creek and even Fort George, horseback was the normal mode of locomotion. Father Morice was once nine consecutive days on horseback, while, in another part of the country, the Far North, he walked for eleven days without any other rest than the forenoon of a Sunday—when on the wing in regions devoid of economic resources, you do not always do as you please.

Then there was travelling by dog-train. This is comparatively easy on the bare ice of the northern

lakes, by the end of March or in April, or on the level surface of the western prairies. It is hard to realize what this way of travelling really means when it is resorted to in the forests of the Northern Interior of British Columbia. Father Morice's team was once a full day painfully trudging on without a beaten track, to cover a distance of scarcely five miles!

Even in normal conditions, that is, when there is a regular track along the forest trail, the ups and downs of the carriole,<sup>12</sup> the numerous summersaults you have to go through, when your frail vehicle does not turn over and roll you down in the deep snow, as may happen when you slantingly descend the slope of a hill, is all rather exciting and at length becomes as fatiguing to the traveller lodged in the narrow sleigh as it may be to the dogs, which at times are themselves responsible for the accident. The very first sick-call our missionary answered by dog-train may be taken here as a fair sample of all the others which were to come.

The chief of Fond-du-Lac, or Stella, at the upper end of Fraser Lake, was dying, they claimed: would not the priest go to see him before he passed away? This meant a trip of fifty-three miles through the forest and along that body of water in the heart of winter; but who could have resisted the appeal of his friends who had themselves come that far for the spiritual physician?

So off they went in the morning, crossed Lake Stuart and, over hill and dale, dashed as best they could over the snow of the narrow path. At times a ravine had to be crossed: this required all the skill, no less than the strength, of the driver, who must

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<sup>12</sup> Or cradle-like toboggan, whose bottom is made up of one, sometimes two, birch boards.

help the dogs with all his might, especially as some of them, finding the ascent a disagreeable task, get discouraged and merely feign to pull, while constantly keeping a watchful eye over the whip.

For they are not all of the stamp of Butler's hero, Cerf-Volant, whom he curiously calls Cerf-Vola,<sup>13</sup> ambitious, laborious and brave. If there is an animal which knows how to play tricks in season and out of season, it is the harness dog. When really lazy, there is no expedient to which he will not resort in order to avoid exertion, and the dodges to which he may then have recourse are at times evidence of a cuteness which is almost human. Hence, while still among "brutes" when with these dogs, we are nevertheless very far from those with which we have so far been concerned.

But when the ravine has been crossed, what a beautiful sight often strikes the wayfarer through the normally gloomy pines now lighted, as it were, with the fire of innumerable gems—diamonds of the first water glittering through the reflection of the sun as so many bright carbuncles! We mean the optical effects of the hard frozen flakes of snow sticking to the coniferous boughs. At times they seem a most costly lace which assumes all kinds of fanciful shapes and forms the strangest designs, most delicate pieces of gauze with which nature has dressed the arms of the northern forest trees.

But we are not here to admire and muse. On, on is the slogan: a soul is awaiting us, whose eternity perhaps depends on the rapidity of our progress. Moreover, some little accident is more than likely soon to bring us back to the realities of dog-train travelling. For instance, one of the dogs, which is tired of the

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<sup>13</sup> *The Wild North Land, passim*; Montreal, 1874.

prosaic exertion to which he is condemned, imagines that he will liberate himself from the harness by cutting off with his teeth the leather traces just ahead of him. The result of the trick is that those which precede him in the trail—there are always four dogs to a passenger toboggan—run away, gambolling and dancing and barking for joy, when they have to be brought back and the damage done to the harness repaired, not without some considerable loss of time, for which the guilty party is richly punished.

Are you travelling on the bare ice of a lake or over the hardened and well-beaten snow of a village? Your team may have so far feigned to be dead with fatigue; all its members are languishing and ready to give out. Let a strange dog, or some game animal, a rabbit or the like, happen to pass in sight, however. Immediately all fatigue is forgotten, a terrible ambition seems to have suddenly been instilled into each of your dogs who, in spite of all your efforts to restrain them, will rush out of the way, furiously barking, and pounce upon the stranger unless he has the good sense to get out of their way before it is too late—all this while driving their passenger!

The travellers stop at dusk, slightly clear the ground of snow with their snowshoes and fell down dead trees, while a third strews over the soil boughs for the priest's blankets: his travelling bed!

Meanwhile the canines are resting in different corners; but as soon as they smell the grilling of their dried salmon, they forget all their troubles. Up they now stand with eager eyes fixed on the object of their covetousness. It requires much dexterity with quite a show of authority on the part of him who feeds them to prevent fights, out of which the

weakest or least vicious would come maimed and often useless for the rest of the journey.<sup>14</sup>

Then the missionary and his companions themselves have their own frugal meal, the most prominent condiment of which is often the stinking smoke of the bivouack fire. The eyes of the white man protest against it, his stomach wishes for better food; but one is not a missionary to be comfortable or have one's fill, especially when on the wing.

After a few moments of rest, every one is up again at one after midnight; the travellers<sup>15</sup> partake of a mouthful of food and a cup of sooty coffee,<sup>16</sup> and off they go at half-past one. Guided by the twinkling of the stars, they cross the divide which separates the Stuart Lake and Fraser Lake basins; so that progress is now a little easier because often down hill. Further on, the better beaten track and wider trail tell of the proximity of the village. "Too! too! too!" cries out the driver with a peculiar trembling of the lips, and the dogs run and bark in the highest glee as they foresee the end of their trip.

A halt is called at the village for the first real meal of the day: none too soon, it is two p.m. Then a new team of dogs is put to the harness, which immediately exhibits before the other dogs of the place what it can do over the ice of Fraser Lake.

"*Marche! marche!*" is the urging cry used by everybody, English as well as French or Indians, in the North, and some drivers possess quite a formidable array of French words which they hurl like so many

<sup>14</sup> Especially as the priest's team is made up of dogs which are not used to work together, each one being lent him by one of the families of the place to which he is repairing.

<sup>15</sup> The dogs are then given nothing to eat, else they would become lazy and could not be made to run.

<sup>16</sup> Father Morice could never get accustomed to the taste of tea.

thunderbolts at the frightened dogs, who then hasten and run to the utmost of their capacity. "*Oh! le Crapaud! Marche, Chocolat! Saloperie! Marche donc! Oh! le Cochon!*" Who could withstand such terrible objurgations?

No wonder if the missionary now flies over the ice, and some time after sunset reaches the smoky lodge of the old chief, who is really very sick, but so glad, so happy that the man of God has come to comfort him and prepare him for his last journey! The rites of the Church are administered to him in presence of all the Indians fervently praying for him, and, after a more or less—rather less—good night passed with the natives, the pastor of that humble flock sets out on his return journey accompanied by the thanks of every one.

On such occasions as this, the fatigues and inconveniences of the way count for very little in the balance of a good priest, and give place to a feeling of contentment consequent on the sense of a duty performed. Hence the sorrow and disappointment are proportionately bitter when such an act of charity becomes an impossibility.

The reader remembers Hobel, or Robert, who profited with Father Morice by the so opportune intervention of the mosquitoes on Driftwood River. Some years after, just in the early spring, the priest heard somehow that he was very sick at Tache, twenty-five miles and a half north of the central Mission, and that the poor man, who was a thoroughly good Indian, was begging for his visit. The weather had become quite warm for the season, and the ice on the lake so soft that it could no longer be utilized for travelling. What was to be done? Tache was on the same lake, and there was scarcely any other way of reaching it than over the

ice. Nevertheless, hoping against hope, Father Morice went to the length of trying a mountain route on horse-back. With difficulty could he thus cover a few miles, at times in very deep snow, but he had finally to turn back, his horse being exhausted and unable to proceed any further, while snowshoeing was out of the question, because of the little consistency of the snow which, moreover, had entirely disappeared in places.

Meanwhile, poor Robert, who did not know of this, was wondering at the failure of the priest to come to his aid.

"I thought he loved me," he said before dying.

Communicated later on to Father Morice, this remark was like a dagger which stabbed him in the heart; but what could he have done? Air travelling was as yet unknown.

Such services could, of course, scarcely be extended to the Babines, who lived much too far away. Thanks to their missionary's persistence, they none the less came to merit them. In course of time, all those living in the basin of their lake, even to the woman who had almost caused his death, abandoned their deviltries: potlatches and dancing and conjuring and gambling, as well as the practice of the old pagan observances.

So that they were all baptized when he left them, and had become good Christians without ceasing to be genuine Babines, that is, great talkers and not a little loud-mouthed babblers.

Babines or Carriers, especially the last, were remarkable for one thing, which was a great consolation to their missionary: whatever might have been their life, they generally died well. Cases of religious indifference were extremely rare amongst them, and irreligion, especially in the face of death, was some-

thing unheard of and thought to be impossible with people not devoid of the use of their mental faculties.

As a rule, perhaps because of their simpler life and fewer abuses of graces, they did not manifest that terror at the approach of death which then belabours some whites. They would take philosophically the coming of their end, deeming it an unavoidable event which, in quite a number of cases, had been rather desired, and which was to deliver the patient from a series of untold ills and miseries. Especially if blessed with the assistance of the minister of religion, the death of the natives was as peaceful, nay, often joyous, as nature would allow. For in many cases the moribund, fortified by the last Sacraments of his Church, received while his home was filled with friends and relatives devoutly reciting prayers for him, fell into some sort of extasis, which seemed the harbinger of approaching bliss, and it may be asked whether, in some cases, he was not favoured with a real apparition of heavenly visitors coming to take his soul up to his reward. At all events, this is what some claimed.

**BENEFACTOR**



## CHAPTER V

### BENEFATOR

[1885-1903]

**A**SPECIAL chapter to show Father Morice as a benefactor of his people may seem more or less out of place and in the light of useless redundancy here. Are not all missionaries public benefactors? Why, then, this attempt at pointing out what is to most readers a matter of course?

The answer is easy. Father Morice did for his Indians what no other missionary has done for his, save, perhaps, Father Lacombe, and, in the matter of acquiring knowledge by artificial means, the Rev. James Evans for the Crees and Father Christian Le Clercq for the Micmacs. The prodigious influence which our missionary's mastery of his people's language and his endless exertions in their behalf, as well as his successful interventions with the powers that be, gained for him, shows him to us in the light of a unique benefactor in the secular field, in which it is safe to say that very few, if any, other clergymen ever outdid him.

It is those peculiar benefactions, imparted in matters of rather civil, or at least non-religious, complexion, which we intend to bring into relief in the following pages.

The first of these, in point of time as well as importance, is his invention of the Déné Syllabary. James Evans, a Methodist missionary at Norway House, had long before shown the way with his Cree Syllabary, which has immensely helped the furtherance of missionary activities among Catholic as well as

Protestant aborigines. It would be as vain as unjust to try and belittle Evans' achievement, even if it had no other merit than that of having hit upon the outlines of the system. But that minister's syllabics are inadequate to the task of rendering the so numerous and delicate sounds of the Déné languages.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in a set of signs the vocalic value of which depends on the direction of its general strokes, it is a real drawback to have some turned, for instance, to the right, others to the left, etc., while expressing the same vowel sound. For instance, Evans' sign for *ā* points upwards, while those for *chā* and *mā* point downwards. On the other hand, so complicated is the make-up of those for syllables in *y*, that it is next to impossible to tell the direction of their angle, or rather of their angles, for the character therefor has two of them, each of which points differently, etc.

The same remark is in order when it is a question of curves.

Be this as it may, Father Morice had not been two months among the Carrier Indians of Stuart Lake when, already familiar with the most frequently recurring sounds of their language by what he knew of the Chilcotin dialect, he devised, and immediately set to teach, what he called "A New Methodical, Easy and Complete Déné Syllabary." It was definite and final as early as November, 1885. It would detain us too long, on a subject which cannot be very interesting to the general reader, to enter into a detailed account of its many points of excellence. Let the following suffice for our present purpose. To briefly enumerate those which are not to be found in its Cree prototype:

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<sup>1</sup> Which cannot be rendered by less than 70 letters.

## Déné Syllabary.

With A E E I O U						With A E E I O U					
A E E	▷	▷	▷	▷	△	▷	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁
H	◁	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Rb	◁	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
R	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
W	◁	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Hw	◁	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
T, D*	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Th	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
'T	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
P, B*	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
K, G*	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Kb	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
'K	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
N	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
M	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Alone Y						Alone					
Q	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁
'Q	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁	◁
L	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Tl	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Tl	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
T	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Tl	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Z	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Tz, Dz	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
S	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Sh, C	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Tsh, Tc	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Ts	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Ts	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Hiatus * Before proper names *											

### *Explanatory Notes.*

\* These letters are not differentiated in Déné.

† ~ is the nasal *n*.

† *z* is the equivalent of the French *j*.

§ 5 is phonetically intermediate between *s* and *c*.

First, the direction of the curve or angle of each sign *infallibly* determines the nature of the vowel added to the fundamental consonant of each syllable, and this direction is *always* perceived without the least effort of the mind.

Secondly, all the cognate sounds are rendered in the new syllabics by similarly formed characters, the general shape of which denotes the phonetic group to which they belong, while their intrinsic modifications determine the nature of the particular sound they represent.

Third, the modifications of such fundamental characters take place *internally* and in conformity with *logical*, and, therefore, easily learnt, rules<sup>2</sup>

Fourth, in that system, all the smaller signs are consonants without any vowel, and in *no* instance is any of them used in a different capacity.

It is impossible to exaggerate the good which resulted from Morice's invention, inasmuch as his Syllabary being so logically formed and so methodical in composition, its acquisition is very easy. In fact, its author claims that he knew a young man who learned it in the space of two evenings—and please remember that, in this case, to know the value of individual signs is to know how to read, since with them there is nothing like spelling, that bugbear of every white child at school.

The first requisite to accomplish the good it was intended to produce was, of course, the printing of books, wherefor a press and outfit are necessary—a sweet necessity in the eyes of our inventor, who hastened to procure both by ordering from St. Mary's

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Bibliography of the Athabaskan Languages*, by Jas. Constantine Pilling. Washington, 1892, pp. 68, 69. The words in italics indicate the opposite of what is seen in other systems.

Mission the primitive little machine and accessories he had used in his pre-ordination days, and had, at great expense in which his Indians generously helped, special type cast in Montreal according to the models he sent to the foundry.<sup>3</sup>

He at first issued little pamphlets of a religious nature, which opened the eyes of the natives to the possibilities offered by the new pedagogic device. Then he printed a real book of one hundred and forty-four pages, namely, a Primer with graduated readings. Nay, he even published, always with the new signs, a monthly review which gave the chief news of the new and of the old worlds, related the life of a prominent historical personage, furnished stories and useful information, mostly secular, answered the questions of his subscribers, in a word, treated *de omni re scibili et de quibusdam aliis*.<sup>4</sup>

This entailed much extra work for the missionary, who was his own editor, type-setter, proof-reader and pressman; but what was it that Father Morice delighted in if not work?

Then, with very limited fonts of common type, he even issued for the benefit of future missionaries and others a little book entitled *Le Petit Catéchisme à l'usage des Sauvages Porteurs*, which was much more than its title would indicate: a religious work with native texts and translations, which he struck off his little press as early as 1891. Owing to a most unfortunate circumstance which will have to be related in our chapter on "Trials," there are now only two copies of this one

<sup>3</sup> The accompanying photographic reproduction of the whole Syllabary will facilitate the understanding of our remarks. As to the matrices of that type, they still belong by right to the inventor, but we fear it would be rather hard to locate them to-day, though it is known that they were made by the Dominion Type Founding Co.

<sup>4</sup> Of any thing that can be learnt and a few others.

hundred and forty-four page booklet in existence: one in the possession of the author, and the other nobody knows where.<sup>5</sup>

Little by little, by dint of the strictest economy and with the help of the special resources resulting from the publication of a book<sup>6</sup> often referred to in these pages, a fund was amassed which allowed the little machine of the early days to be replaced by a beautiful Chandler & Price Gordon press of good size, and an outfit in keeping therewith, by means of which our versatile friend turned out such good work that he professed to be in love with her! As a matter of fact, he printed with her quite a pamphlet of *Minor Essays* (1902) in English, about which a Dr. George Kennedy, editor of the Canadian Institute *Transactions*, declared that better work could scarcely be done in Toronto. And this was in the backwoods of British Columbia!

Father Morice's printing was chiefly, nay, almost exclusively, for the benefit of his Indian charge. With his new press he issued, among others, a beautiful syllabic Prayer-Book in two colours containing, apart from the very many formulas of prayers for all occasions, the catechism of Christian doctrine, religious readings and eighty hymns, all of his own composition, as was the rest. And the fact that all his Indians knew in the shape of prayers, catechisms, etc., was due to him could not fail to enhance his importance in their unsophisticated eyes. This fine book of three hundred and twenty-eight pages is very much in demand to-day, and is worth more than its weight in gold, but cannot be procured at any price, for reasons which will be seen in our eleventh chapter.

<sup>5</sup> We remember seeing it once catalogued by a dealer in old or rare books.

<sup>6</sup> *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir.*

We would ask any fair-minded reader if he considers a missionary who goes to the trouble of inventing a handy method of expressing on paper a hitherto unknown language, who teaches it in every village, has type cast for use in making books, then spends all his spare time, thirteen hours per day when no other work hinders it, in printing them with his own hands, and goes even to the length of becoming a journalist all the more to further his flock's mental advancement—is such a man to be confounded with those who never do anything but what is absolutely necessary—that is, preach and catechize on purely religious subjects?

Meritorious as was his work, even the originator of the syllabic idea never printed any primer or real prayer-book, let alone a monthly periodical, though he ultimately struck off, aided by women and two men,<sup>7</sup> fly leaves containing hymns and portions of the Scriptures.

Thenceforth the traveller through the northern forest of British Columbia could not help noticing that there had come into the country some artificial way of rendering one's thoughts which was beyond him. The Indian would tear off part of the bark of a tree trunk, or blaze it with his axe, and, with one of those pieces of charcoal which remain silent witnesses to past conflagrations and are to be found in almost all parts of the Columbian forest, would write on the bared wood such information, message or appeal as he wished, which would afterwards be deciphered by the future passer-by. Of course, there were occasional abuses, but where is the good which cannot be made to serve evil ends?

To return to our inventor. There can be no doubt

<sup>7</sup> Cf. John McLean, *James Evans, Inventor of the Syllabic System of the Cree Language*, p. 170. Toronto, 1890; Egerton R. Young, *The Apostle of the North: Rev. James Evans*, p. 194. Toronto, 1899.

that the strenuous exertions to which he was put by those various printing ventures contributed to shorten his stay in the North. If at least he had been able to get a suitable diet to second his physical and mental efforts, things might have been different. Being all alone for everything, without a servant to help him in any way, cooking himself as well as printing, he too often neglected the former for the sake of the latter. And his health suffered.

For days of thirteen hours' hard work, with no recess after meals, he used to fry in a small pan, after the morning service in the church, potatoes with scanty slices of bacon, which were to do for the whole day. In the morning, he would eat one-third of his panful, another third at two or three p.m., that is, when the pangs of hunger were no longer bearable, then return to his type-setting or printing until late in the evening, when he would consume the remaining third.

Day rest of any kind was unknown to him, unless you call rest the changing of occupation.

As to his press, it was indeed a beautiful machine, but it was made for power, and all the power that was available at his place was, of course, that of his right foot. So that when, one day, a French visitor, an exceedingly rare bird at Stuart Lake, had for some time silently contemplated the exertions of the clerical pressman, "kicking" his machine in the midst of drops of sweat which fell to the floor as rain to the ground, he could not help most seriously warning him against such excesses.

"If you don't stop that," he declared, "you will be under ground in less than five years."

Father Morice smiled, professed incredulity, continued the work he loved so much, and he now triumph-

antly exclaims that he is still alive after thirty years or more.

But he had to quit, very much against his will, as we shall see later on.

Might not that necessity have also been particularly due to the imprudences of which he was guilty during many years of his sojourn at Stuart Lake? We have just seen what his usual fare was; it is not useless to add that, in the matter of bodily comfort in winter, even when at home, he was no better off. In order to give a faithful idea of how he then passed his nights after he had so abstemiously and so laboriously spent his days, we may as well remark that, for the sake of sparing the price of a stove in his bedroom, he would, each winter, go through something like three weeks, that is, over twenty nights (not, of course, strictly in succession) without any sleep because of the extreme cold, which no amount of covering would remedy.

With no fire all night except in a little kitchen stove, which very soon went out, he would get up all benumbed in the morning, when the water of his wash basin was frozen hard to the bottom, and, as he had to be in the church at a given time, all he could do to clean himself was to pass his hands over the ice, an operation which was completed after Mass, when he had had time to make a fire, and get some water. Such were the results of his economizing disposition!

All this was for the sake of his Indians, and they knew it and loved him all the more for it. They had, however, other reasons to feel attached to him and think highly of him; namely, his frequent and always successful interventions on their behalf with the civil authorities. We could record quite a number of instances of these, which gained for him such a tremendous power over the whole North that he literally

had its inhabitants at his beck and call, or he became "the king of the country," as a Hudson's Bay Company's official inspector once put it. Three such cases, representative of as many parts of the country, should be enough to convince the reader of the appropriateness of the trader's declaration.

The first is connected with a Fraser Lake youth, Edward, son of William *Noos'kai*, the very best Indian of his place, as upright and quiet a man as people of his race could be.

One day the child, who may have been seventeen years old, was walking along a narrow forest trail just behind another boy of his age, *Me'kep*, when his gun went off in the course of the most innocent little frolic, and its shots lodged themselves in the heel of his companion. Unfortunately, the loss of blood was so great during the time that Edward had gone for help that, although brought home with all possible alacrity, he died two days later, assisted by the missionary, who had thus an opportunity of learning at first hand all the particulars of the case.

No possible guilt was, or could be, fastened on any one in this sad occurrence. But a certain Quesnel J.P., having somehow got an inkling of it, took the matter differently. That man who, in spite of his name, passed for being of Jewish extraction, had, years before, bought from the Catholic Mission of William's Lake a number of steers for butchering, which he had neglected to pay for until forced by a regular recourse to law. Hence in his bosom a well conditioned dislike for anything Catholic, which he seized upon the first occasion to vent.

In this state of mind, though he was probably not acquainted with Father Morice, he knew that he was a Catholic priest, and that the boy who had accident-

ally shot his companion was of the same faith. That seemed to settle the question for him, and whether, even with the help of an interpreter, he could not properly understand the depositions of those he interrogated or wilfully falsified them, he found Edward guilty of having shot Me'kep because of a girl about whom there had been some jest or jealousy, and decided to have him sent down to Vancouver, there to be tried for murder. So it came to pass that the innocent Catholic boy, who probably had never as much as given a serious thought to a girl yet, had to appear before the assizes which, under the circumstances, could scarcely have any other issue possible than a death sentence!

As soon as he learnt of this, our missionary beckoned to himself the interpreter in the Quesnel examination, who was astounded at being told of the Jew's fanciful version of the tragedy. This he swore to have been given a totally different complexion even at Quesnel. Whereupon the priest immediately wrote a detailed account of the affair as he had it from the dead boy's own mouth and from what he had heard of others, the Quesnel interpreter included.

As a result, not only was poor Edward released, but the missionary received from no less a party than the Hon. Joseph Martin,<sup>8</sup> who was then Attorney-General of British Columbia, a letter in which he stated how grateful the Government felt for all he had done to further the aims of justice in the North—a circumstance which betrays the fact that this was not the first instance of the priest helping to prevent judicial errors. At the same time, any reader will readily see

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<sup>8</sup> Who was responsible for the abolition of the Catholic Schools in Manitoba.

to what extent such successful steps of a pastor were calculated to augment his prestige with his flock.

The next case took place at his very door. Shortly after the American-Spanish war, a typical Yankee, that is, a tall and lank man, who claimed to have taken part in the affray and, of course, styled himself a colonel, visited Fort St. James, close to Father Morice's headquarters. There he had a little drinking bout with the half-breed Jimmy Alexander, whom we have seen as a child at William's Lake Mission school. As a result of this, the couple had a falling out, and Jimmy went so far as to hurl the bragging war chief over a fence, which operation hurt the stranger to the extent of forcing him to return to Quesnel. There the American officer lodged a complaint against Jimmy, and had a summons for his arrest issued.

Shortly thereafter, on a cold winter evening, when Lake Stuart had long been imprisoned under its icy blanket, as Father Morice was preparing his church for the Sunday service called the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, he wondered how it was that, contrary to custom, so few had come in though the second bell was almost on the point of ringing. As he was pondering over this, he suddenly heard several shots at a short distance, to which, at the time, he paid little attention.

Having then questioned his people, after the service, on the cause of the scant attendance thereat, he was told that three constables had come all the way from Quesnel, about one hundred and sixty miles away, in order to arrest Jimmy Alexander for the murder of the American. Covered by guns in his own house, a quarter of a mile from the church, Jimmy had apparently submitted with good grace to the representatives of the law and was preparing to go with them

when, on a futile pretext, he had made his exit and suddenly dashed away with the constables in pursuit, who, seeing that he was not heeding their order to stop, were firing at him. This had excited the populace, some of whom fled to arms but were restrained by their wives from using them.

As to Jimmy, he soon outdistanced his pursuers on the ice of the lake,<sup>9</sup> and in no time their prospective prey had disappeared in some mysterious nook familiar to him, whence he made for unknown parts.

Baffled, the officials had to return to the fort with the painfully acquired conviction that it was more easy to arrest one of their own kind than an Indian, or even a half-breed. They were not, however, so they thought, to be definitely outwitted. They tried, but in vain, to hire natives to help them in the chase: nobody would stoop to what was considered such a base rôle. Four days long, the constables scoured every bay and searched every village on the lake, but in vain. They asked for all kinds of information, but were as many times fooled by feigning sympathizers who were really for Jimmy. The man had been seen here, some declared; others pretended they had smelt the smoke of his camp-fire there, while a third party gravely assured that, in his flight, he had already reached Bear Lake, two hundred and twenty miles to the north!

Father Morice admits that all the time he knew that this was not only untrue, but impossible. But he had never seen the constables, who were sure they could attain their ends without securing his services, and his conscience did not impress him with the duty of running after them against a member of his own flock.

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<sup>9</sup> Long after, the natives would mimic their, to them, funny way of running.

Finally the officers saw the uselessness of their chase and realized how powerless they were in that strange land. On the evening of the following Thursday, they came to beg Father Morice to intervene on behalf of the law.

Remembering that Jimmy's young wife was by this time worried to death, and that his two little tots were continually crying after their dad, no less than in order to further the fugitive's own interests, the priest promised to persuade him to go and deliver himself up into the hands of the Quesnel authorities, provided he was assured that he would be treated not only fairly but leniently, since the cause of the whole trouble was the American himself, who had made the half-breed drink what he should never have tasted. This being solemnly promised, the constables departed on the morrow, and the priest wrote to Jimmy who, two days after, put in an appearance and gave his word that he would do what he was told. At the same time, he asked for a respite sufficient to allow of the healing of a wound one of the white men's bullets had caused to his heel when he was running away from them, a wound which, for the time being, debarred him from undertaking such a long trip on snowshoes. Jimmy Alexander then went down, learnt to his satisfaction that the American was alive and well, and was condemned to pay a fine of fifty dollars.

The third case illustrative of Father Morice's unlimited power over his charge may be considered a still greater achievement. For quite a long time, his district, which extended from Fort George, in the south, to Bear Lake, in the north and farther (as will appear in our next chapter), was without a representative of the Federal Government upon whom the Indians directly depend. In fact, that district did not then

contain any person of our race, save in one or two trading posts,<sup>10</sup> while the others were in charge of half-breeds. Then a Mr. R. E. Loring, a noble German just married to the late Mr. Hankin's relict,<sup>11</sup> was appointed Indian Agent, with residence at Hazelton, outside of the territory under Catholic influences.

At first inclined to rather overestimate his own importance with regard to the natives, that gentleman, who was as sensible as he was upright, though very German in his ways, was not slow in realizing the Catholic priest's transcendent position in the same sphere, and, instead of trying to thwart him in his operations, shrewdly made him serve his own ends, or, rather, do his own work, as will appear by the following circumstances.

On a cold February afternoon, Father Morice had arrived at the big Indian village just at the end of Babine Lake,<sup>12</sup> after a painful trip of eight days' duration on snowshoes and by dog-train, when, after the usual loud greetings expressed by the voice of scores of rifles and guns, he was handed a big solemn-looking official envelope. Attentively perusing the many documents it contained, the missionary soon realized that a very difficult task was thrown on his shoulders. Briefly, this was the question submitted to his consideration by Mr. Loring. It must be remembered that this was before Father Morice had succeeded in eradicating from among the Babine tribe those pot-latches which are the curse of the Pacific coast aborigines.

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<sup>10</sup> Of which there were then six in the district.

<sup>11</sup> The Hon. Phillip J. Hankin was one of the pioneer legislators of British Columbia in pre-Confederation times. In 1870, we see him occupying the post of Colonial Secretary and Presiding Member, while the following year he is styled Speaker of the House in the records. His wife, a beautiful lady, now Mrs. Loring, was the daughter of a Hudson's Bay Company's *bourgeois* called McAulay.

<sup>12</sup> And near the fort of the same name.

gines, from whom the institution had been borrowed by the inland Indians.

For some time the Hudson's Bay Company's trader had perceived that merchandise which was to aggregate four thousand dollars was being purloined from his store, and careful investigations had resulted in the certainty that this had been slyly gathered up in some secret spot of the wood, with a view to serving to enhance the social prestige of the thief, in a potlatch. Worse than all, and scarcely believable, the trader had come to the conclusion that the culprit was none other than the head chief of the village himself!

A complaint against him having been lodged with high quarters at Victoria, the provincial authorities had dispatched five special constables to effect the arrest of the accused. But either because pilfering on such a large scale was deemed impossible, especially as it was attributed to a chief, or because of that solidarity which is instinctive in the natives whenever they are pitted against the whites, the constables had been forcibly prevented from accomplishing their mission, being fired at by the Babines, and had been compelled to turn tail.

He who knows those Indians' rather violent dispositions and their reputation for clannishness will not be too ready to blame them.

This, of course, did not suit the Hudson's Bay Company and its representative at Babine. They insisted and clamoured for redress, even if a little army had to be sent in. The Indian Agent, Mr. Loring, who lived sixty miles away, being officially advised of the situation, had sense enough to deprecate the intervention of the military.

"The Babines' missionary is to come to their chief place in February," he said. "He has the greatest

influence over them, and I shall write to him. If he cannot settle the matter, then you will be free to act as you please." Such was the gist of his pleading, and the result of it was the solemn-looking envelope now in the hands of the priest.

That was indeed a most delicate question for him to tackle. The greatest prudence and not a little tact were necessary to reach a satisfactory solution of the problem, as the very thought of a chief being such a thief was as repugnant to the natives as it was to their spiritual guide. Yet he was bound to act: the representative of aboriginal authority could not remain under such a cloud.

Father Morice, therefore, called in a meeting of the head chief (the accused) and all the petty chiefs of the tribe, stated its object, and suggested that it might be advisable that the former go of himself to Hazelton and clear himself of the charge in presence of the Indian Agent acting as judge.<sup>13</sup>

The proposal raised a storm of protests, which, of course, had been fully expected by the priest. He wanted to allow the wounded feelings of the notables an occasion for relief by free expression. He listened patiently to all the speeches, and God knows they were long and loud and even abusive of the whites! Then, assuming the tone of one who speaks with authority, he showed them how very futile were their threats against people who were numerous as mosquitoes on a sultry day, and would not fail to come and burn their village and, if they could not actually dislodge them from their mountain fastnesses by the force of arms, would easily starve them out.

"At any rate," he concluded, "if, as I myself

<sup>13</sup> An Indian agent has, judicially, the powers of two Justices of the Peace.

believe, your chief is not guilty, he can lose nothing but gain everything by going to show his innocence to the judge, who, I give you my word for it, will try him fairly and will not condemn him without very good ground. One of our chiefs cannot stand indefinitely in the category of the accused. He must vindicate his honour, and not pass for being probably a thief because he dares not face a judge. Therefore I, your pastor, who love him as much as you do, say: by all means, let him go and surrender himself as soon as he can."

At these words, uttered with that sense of authority which, in the native eye, is inherent to the Catholic priesthood, a dead silence fell upon the assembly, and all eyes converged on the head chief, who had not as yet opened his mouth. He finally did open it, and it was to declare in no uncertain tone:

"There is not in the world a man able to make me do that. But the priest is not a man: he is the representative of God on earth. Therefore I will do what he wants me to do."

He did go and delivered himself up, was duly tried and fairly examined. But the proofs against him were overwhelming; he was found guilty and condemned to a short period of mitigated seclusion at Hazelton—a most mild sentence under the circumstances.

The priest had won his point and human law was satisfied, but the chief lost his prestige. In his next visit Father Morice degraded him, and put somebody in his place.

Not only did our friend thus intervene in quasi-civil affairs, always in the interest of justice no less than for the welfare of his people, but he encouraged amongst them thriftiness and love of work when not hunting or fishing. With this end in view, he allotted

to them, out of the Mission property, plots of land to cultivate for their own benefit, gave them the example by transforming into a productive garden what had previously been nothing but a bare waste of red clay, and, a little distance off, strenuously worked in his spare moments at beautifying the environs of the church, according to a plan which, not being understood after his departure, was abandoned, and the work already done diverted into different channels.<sup>14</sup>

His intentions were, besides personally resting from mental strain by occasional manual labour, to teach the same to his people, at the same time as he was economically helping the poor women, mostly old, who had scarcely anybody to fall back upon for their sustenance. "Any work, even not necessary, better than idleness," he thought.

It is useless to add that his name among the representatives of the Governments, both federal and provincial, was sufficient to get, without any difficulty from either, not only the seeds needed by able-bodied men and the remedies necessary to the sick,<sup>15</sup> but even occasionally a little relief for the old and infirm. Infinitesimal as it may seem, we will even add a detail concerning the priest's activity which may at least be of some little use in explaining what is meant by the title of this chapter, even if it has no other advantage.

In his time, the prospect of ever having a railway line traversing the country was considered a wild dream. Locomotion was therefore by horseback during the fair season. But it often happened that some camping places along the forest trail had all that was needed as regards distance, water and fire-wood, but

<sup>14</sup> To help in the work of excavation and filling up, he even made with his own hands a cart, or tumbrel, of which he was proud!

<sup>15</sup> Father Morice had some little knowledge of medicine.

were devoid of food for the horses. Our missionary did not deem it below his station in life to try and remedy that unsatisfactory state of things. He sowed himself in such spots timothy grass seed which he had personally cultivated and harvested near his Stuart Lake home, thus rendering horseback travelling more easy, at the same time as he was giving his charge another lesson in thriftiness.

This seems a very small service indeed, but one which goes to show that our hero was public-spirited enough not to confine his attention to his missionary labours, to the writing of books and essays, or even to the printing of native literature.

Reverting to what may be considered the religious sphere of our missionary's activities, we think we are warranted in finding even there traces of secular originality: for the profane in religion, as it were, likewise concurred in classing him as a special benefactor of his people, inasmuch as, in that very same connection, he exceeded the limits strictly called for by his vocation and thereby contributed to the public weal among those under him.

Take, for instance, the Christmas celebration. To the Catholic at large, this means a Midnight Mass, with some old carols and perhaps a short sermon; nothing more. Under Father Morice, this had become, in addition, what we might call a folk-feast of a most touching character, one of those happenings whose hallowed memories will haunt the mind and embalm the soul for weeks, and the recurrence of which was eagerly anticipated. This resulted from a particularity which appealed to the imagination of the native and proportionately increased his religious fervour, we mean the execution in the church of a "pastorale," intended to recall the momentous event of Bethlehem.

Three distinct parts concurred in its performance. A dozen girls or young women, grouped in a corner of the sacred edifice, sang out the part of the Angels; two or three young men, posted elsewhere, represented the Narrator, or him who played the connecting link between Angels and Shepherds, and explained what was happening, or going to take place, while the bulk of the faithful personified the Shepherds.

To a most lively tune an Angel first awoke the sleeping shepherds who, in a no less brisk way, testified to their extreme surprise at what they heard and saw, giving vent in their song to expectation tempered by fear. Then came the heavenly message, delivered by all the angels uniting their accords and followed by the joyful, if not obstreperous, acclaim of the shepherds and the noisy expression of their willingness to respond to the divine invitation—a sung dialogue between heaven and earth, the former emphasizing the happy results of the glad tidings, the latter reiterating its ready acquiescence, until the choir of angels breaks forth into the great hymn, "*Glory to God in the highest,*" a stanza which is rendered in a musical duet.

The narrator then comes on, singing out a march which tells of the alacrity, of the immense happiness with which the shepherds hasten towards the goal indicated to them. He shows them marching on, then prostrating themselves at the feet of the helpless Babe of the crib—when the whole crowd of worshippers in the church fall down on their knees as one man, ready to imitate the shepherds of old in their offering of love, thanks and adoration.

This is a solemn, a most striking moment. The whole congregation breaks forth into an ocean of musical sound: a grand melody, an imposing harmony in four parts, executed to perfect time and in a most

reverent way by the worshippers as they render the prayer of the shepherds at the feet of the Child-God. It is impossible to imagine anything more impressive in its grandeur: a perfect pipe organ filling in the whole church!

Though counting only eighty-four lines, this pastorale takes quite a little time, yet so short to the loving hearts of the performers! to execute, because of some strophes which are repeated as refrains.

We now need only to add that the tunes of its different parts are admirably adapted to express the consecutive eagerness, surprise and fear, then acquiescence and alacrity of the shepherds, followed by their prayerful and religious accents at the Crib coming as a prompt answer to the invitation of the angels.

Is it, after that, necessary to remark that Morice's Indians delighted in giving out that pastorale? For them it was the sacred drama of almost two thousand years ago enacted over again for their own benefit. In their eyes no pastorale no Christmas, and no Father Morice no pastorale!

# FARTHER NORTH



## CHAPTER VI

### FARTHER NORTH

(1900-1904)

**F**IVE miles from Hazelton, which stands at the junction of the Bulkley River with the Skeena by about  $55^{\circ} 15'$  of latitude, is the Babine village of Rocher Déboulé,<sup>1</sup> or Ackwilgate, as the Tsimshians have it.<sup>2</sup> This was reached from the Hazelton side either by canoe at the confluence of the smaller stream and then walking five miles, or by a bridge, a real suspension bridge of native manufacture, just opposite the village.

That frail structure, which consisted of three tree lengths joined to one another, spanned a rocky narrowing of the Bulkley which here forms a rapid, the remnants of a fall. There, three straight but slender juxtaposed logs had their butt-ends made fast on the ground by means of big stones laid over them, and their smaller ones projecting over the water, where they were fastened to three others filling in the gap left by those whose heavy ends rested on the bluffs, rising on either side of the river.

Not a nail or a piece of iron, but ropes of cedar bark fibres, entered into the construction of the native piece of engineering, the use of which was supposed to be facilitated by the addition, right and left, of a few poles hung horizontally at distances which generally could not be reached by the hands.

The worst part of this was that so frail was the primitive bridge which resulted from that assemblage that, as soon as you set foot over it, it started to

<sup>1</sup> Or Fallen Rock, from part of the mountain just back of it which formerly fell off into the river.

<sup>2</sup> Ackwilgate means "well-dressed."

shake. You could not advance three or four steps on it without causing the whole thing to swing in a most ominous manner over the angry billows of the rapid. The necessity of watching for a point to tread on forced you to look at it and exposed you to the danger of fatal dizziness.

Father Morice had already passed it several times, painfully crawling on hands and knees with perspiration on his brow, and had finally sworn never to attempt again such a perilous venture when, having been called to the village, where he was eagerly awaited, he was assured that the famous bridge had been steadied and could be crossed without much difficulty.

Once arrived there, however, the missionary realized that it was the same old rickety structure, and at once expressed his displeasure that he should have been brought in front of a place which he could not reach—just across almost the whole population of the village had congregated, the men with rifle in hand ready to salute his arrival on their side, and were shouting out to him their best encouragements. Two of them came across, as if to show how easily this could be done and how solid was their bridge. They offered to help him on to the village, nay, almost forced their services on him, one of them walking over it immediately ahead of him, the other just behind. But when the white man commenced to feel the swinging of the old thing to the right and to the left, he knew that dizziness was going to have the better of him.

"Back! back! I cannot do it," he cried out.

But his guides would not go back, and, on the contrary, tried to coax him on. They had, however, to yield to his entreaties, when presently a little man with no aristocratic features (see his latest portrait)



DZIKENIS IN GALA DRESS  
*Sketch by Paul Cose, of Paris*

ran in from the other side, and offered to pack the priest over.

Instantly Father Morice thought of the man whom Blondin carried on his shoulders across Niagara Falls, and shuddered.

"No danger," protested Dzikenis (Chickens), "no danger. I will pack you without the least difficulty."

All the bystanders averred that, despite appearances, the little wiry man was serious and could do it, having already taken across that same bridge on his broad back that most unwieldy of burdens, a one hundred and fifty pound barrel of sugar! Father Morice was ungenerous enough to refuse to add to his laurels, and, to the disgust of the crowd on the other side, he preferred to ride ten good miles round, and reached at dusk the village, whence all enthusiasm seemed to have gone.

Everybody is not a born acrobat, and our clerical friend pretends that he has worse shortcomings than unsteady legs in mid-air over rushing waters.

To return to his Indians. It could not be denied that by this time the population of his district had made real progress from several standpoints, material as well as spiritual. The churches of the old days, which were nothing else than lodges of a special form, had been replaced by edifices as well constructed as could be expected from builders with their special environment. *Regis ad instar*,<sup>3</sup> their own residences had undergone an analogous transformation.

The Carriers had now nothing but contempt and mockery for the pretensions of the medicine-men, who were a thing of the past amongst them. We have already seen that the lake Babines themselves

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<sup>3</sup> Like the king.

had ended by conforming their conduct to the instructions of the missionary, abandoning their old reprehensible practices, and, though there still lurked some fear of the jugglers among the older generation, the exercise of their black art was no longer tolerated in their midst.

Of all their ancestral customs which had thus been sacrificed, the one which had taken the most vigorous roots with them, that was the nearest to their hearts, was that of the potlatch.<sup>4</sup> Carriers and Babines were divided into clans, or gentes, as sociologists prefer to say, to which corresponded the parcelling out of the hunting grounds, at the head of which were hereditary noblemen, or petty chiefs, with whom and for whom hunted the common people of the clan.

The death of one of those notables<sup>5</sup> occasioned a series of public feasts, or ostentatious distributions of eatables and property by the presumptive heir, aided by all his fellow clansmen, feasts and distributions (or potlatches) which were, during three or four years, repeated with varying ceremonial, as a consequence of which the new nobleman enjoyed all the rights and privileges of his predecessor.

A legitimate and quite innocent organization, will, perhaps, remark the superficial observer. Yet Father Morice and his superior and model, Bishop Durieu, passed year after year thundering against it, and the latter preferred to lose the northern Coast Indians, Kwakiutl, Haidas and Tsimshians, who would not part with it, rather than admit into his Church what he picturesquely called "washed (that is, baptized) pagans," people who would combine such irreconcil-

<sup>4</sup> *Potlatch* or *palach* is a Chinook word standing for "to give away."

<sup>5</sup> In their own language: *tenl-sa*, almost "the only men," that is the men by excellence.

able things as the precepts of Christ and what is nothing else than native American paganism. There is at the base of that system, properly understood, a concept which borders on idolatry, since it attributes to animals regarded as patrons, or protectors, a consideration which is nothing if not superstitious.

Moreover, those ritual feasts, or distributions, immensely impoverish those who give them and deprive their families of their legitimate due, while they are the source of the greatest disorders, not only from a Christian, but from a secular, standpoint. They are the exhibition of a pride which is simply phenomenal. The deeds of the ones excite the jealousy of the others, and, as we have seen in our preceding chapter, will at times prompt even those who should be social models to the most shameful pilfering. Hence ensued enmities, quarrels and recriminations, fights and unending feelings of spite and resentment, most un-Christian dispositions, without counting the usual adjuncts of the same, gambling and immorality, together with a total neglect of religious duties.

This is so true that the native innocence of the Sékanais, who never knew the potlatch, is in most striking contrast to the looseness of morals proper to the original Carriers and Babines. Hence the fulminations against those ancestral festivities which all enlightened missionaries launched at them, fulminations in which concurred even the civil authorities of British Columbia, through a law enacted to do away with them within that province, the only one where they are known.

By this time (1901), the river Babines, that is, those of Rocher Déboulé and of Moricetown, were the only ones who, after sixteen years of insistence on the part of their spiritual guide, had not yet yielded

to his pressing advice. Father Morice had even gone to the length of segregating at the place which came to take his name those who were willing to do away with their old ways. He did so much that finally the others resolved to fall into line with them and become good Christians and full Catholics, not Indians with a mere varnish of civilization but at heart pure pagans, as we see so many on the coast who have a good reputation among Protestants.<sup>6</sup> The latter natives dress and speak and pray like the whites, but are civilized only outwardly.

They had been told that the new Catholic Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Augustine Dontenwill, was soon to come north. To render their conversion all the more memorable and proportionately lasting, they had resolved to profit by his visit in order to give a visible expression to their change of heart.

The new prelate duly arrived at Stuart Lake, and was received with the deference due to his rank and treated with all the greater cordiality as he was himself of a most amiable disposition. But when it became a matter of interpreting him, all the Indians who had discharged that function prior to Father Morice's arrival in the country, declined to do so in the presence of the latter, who had to fill it himself.

When he reached Rocher Déboulé, Bishop Dontenwill and a young priest who accompanied him could, at the close of the retreat preached by the former, "assist at a ceremony which had hitherto been without a precedent. At a given signal, on a fine summer

<sup>6</sup> British Columbia readers who have been told of the work of certain missionaries on the Coast and imagine that their people have become paragons of Christianity because they outwardly conform to the practices of the whites, would be much surprised if they learned how some of them behave when out of the reach of white men's eyes. Father Morice has seen quite a few of them inland; but he does not want to throw stones in his neighbours' garden.

evening, each of the hereditary "nobles," members of secret societies and the medicine-men then present, issued from their respective abodes and brought on the lawn either a crown of grizzly bear claws, a cedar bark magic cincture, a painted wooden mask, a rattle of the same material carved to the arms<sup>7</sup> of the owner, *plus* drums, ceremonial batons or gambling bones, in a word, all that which called to mind the old order of things which was thereby formally abolished.<sup>8</sup> All these paraphernalia had soon formed a big heap on the public place: and in the midst of the deepest silence, a bonfire was made of them."<sup>9</sup>

Quite a few readers may be unable to appreciate the drastic nature of the proceeding. Father Morice himself, with his archaeologist's and sociologist's tastes, confesses that he felt a pang at the sight of this miniature museum going up in smoke. He was acting, however, in his capacity as a missionary from whom the savant had disappeared. He was seeking the salvation of souls for eternity through the abolition of what does them harm, rather than seeking to obtain his own temporary satisfaction by retaining the material evidences of a reprehensible organization! To have tried to spare one of those condemned baubles would have quickly defeated the reformer's purpose. The shrewd natives would have seen nothing wrong in what the priest thought good enough to keep with a safe conscience, nor in the particular institution which

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<sup>7</sup> That is with the figure of the totem, or protective animal.

<sup>8</sup> And which would have remained abolished if the extreme imprudence and ignorance of the real import of all these paraphernalia had not prompted Father Morice's successor (who never asked his advice on any point) not only to unwittingly restore that old pagan system at Rocher Déboulé, but even to introduce it in places where it had been forgotten for many years: a disaster from every standpoint.

<sup>9</sup> Morice, *Histoire de l'Eglise catholique dans l'Ouest Canadien*, vol. IV, p. 368.

it served, while at bottom it was not those objects as such which were condemned, but the ordinances for which they had been made.

Thenceforth all the tribes and subtribes normally under the Roman Catholic priest were Christian. Following Clovis' example, even the least progressive of them had, in a moment of generosity and religious fervour, "burnt what it had so far adored." Everything being now on a good footing among his people, the missionary of Carriers and Babines went the following year (1902) out of his district and flew to new conquests.

Among the natives who had yearly congregated at Bear Lake to profit by his ministrations, were a few from a far-off country called Nahanais, whose chief seat was at Taltan,<sup>10</sup> on the middle Stickine River. Those Indians were Catholics, and for years had been urging the priest to visit their place. Though a Protestant minister<sup>11</sup> had settled there, quite a few of their fellow tribesmen wanted to embrace the religion of the priest, and prayed like the Catholics of the south, though they were not as much as catechumens.

It was decided, therefore, that, being now more free of his time owing to the conversion of the last band of Babines, or at least having abandoned all worry on their score, the missionary would accede to the request of the Nahanais of the north. Owing to the practical lack of a decent trail through the great forest, it was impossible to reach their country directly overland, and he had first to go south seven hundred miles.

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<sup>10</sup> This name, like many others, is not properly spelt, for the lack of special type, but conforms to the usually received orthography of it. It should be something like *Tha*, "in the water"; *lh* (a very peculiar sound) *than*, "it (a dead fish, etc.) lies."

<sup>11</sup> Of the Anglican persuasion.

He did this, starting on May 6, 1902, for his annual tour through the villages of Natl   (Fraser Lake), Stony Creek and Fort George, in all of which he gave the customary spring mission, or retreat. He then made for Victoria, where he embarked for Wrangell, on the island of the same name in Alaska.

An incident here took place which is perhaps worth relating. It may be called the story of a photograph, and goes back to the year 1898, that of the Klondike rush.

The Ashcroft<sup>12</sup> *Journal* had been vaunting the old telegraph<sup>13</sup> trail as the poor man's route to the new gold fields, and, as a consequence, that practically abandoned path, which is quite straight but for that same reason made up of ups and downs, soon became enlivened with a steady flow of humanity in search of the precious metal. Most of those new Argonauts were now cursing the day when they had read that paper or been told of that trail, which was, indeed, they claimed, the poor man's route, that is, the one which made a rich man poor.<sup>14</sup>

Father Morice was one Friday afternoon riding back from Fort George, when, in a prairie just south of Stony Creek, he fell upon a party of Klondikers camped in the shape of a little village for the night's rest.

He was on the point of passing by when two tall young ladies—yes, real ladies in a crowd of prospective

<sup>12</sup> The southern terminus of the famous Cariboo wagon road since the advent of the C.P.R. It was previously at Yale.

<sup>13</sup> Built to practically join America to Europe, as far as communications go, before the laying of the Atlantic cable.

<sup>14</sup> One of the prospective miners who used it lost his mind through the difficulties of the way, another suicided for a similar cause, a third got lost and was devoured by a grizzly, etc. Most of them, instead of following the trail up to Dawson, left it as a rule, as soon as a convenient river, such as the Skeena, the Naas or the Stickine, afforded them the means of reaching the sea, and returned home, ruined.

miners—having noticed that he was a clergyman, came up to ask him whether he was not a Catholic priest. On his affirmative answer, they said that they were themselves Catholic and introduced him to their father, a Protestant. When they learned that the priest was going home, where he expected to be the following Sunday, they inquired whether they could not themselves go there to have one day's rest and attend to their religious duties.

"Certainly," said Father Morice, "provided your father accompanies you."

On the following Sunday, therefore, his poor quarters and church were graced by presences such as had never been seen there before: two live white ladies.

On the following Monday, as the little party was preparing to leave, one of the ladies begged for her host's photograph, a request which was gently but firmly refused.

"You must know that a priest never gives his portrait to a lady who is not related to him," remarked her interlocutor. True to her sex, the lady insisted.

"You see, Father," she said, "we are going to pass through hordes of savages who do not know us and may be unkind to us, because they resent the present influx of whites through their country. We realize your prodigious influence over them. Your name is great even among those who are not of your faith. When they see your photo in our hands, they will perceive that we are your friends and will treat us well for your sake."

That was not a bad idea, as Father Morice admitted. Therefore the coveted photograph passed into the hands of the party.

Four years later, that is, when the same clergyman arrived at Wrangell on his way to the Nahanais of the

Stickine, he was far from feeling at ease, a perfect stranger from a far-away land. In the parlour of the hotel he had entered, while apparently absorbed in the perusal of an American paper, he was quietly sizing up the situation. It was a gathering of, to him, not any too inviting people, men of not very remarkable refinement, talking loudly and rather vulgarly in every way. He was just revolving in his mind how he was going to kill the time until the departure of the small river boat wherewith he was going to ascend the Stickine, when a well-dressed young man asked him, as he was turning the page of his newspaper:

“Excuse me, sir, are you not Father Morice?”

One can imagine the start with which the traveller replied to that question:

“Yes, but may I ask in turn how you know my name?”

“Oh! that is easy,” answered the young gentleman with a smile. “Do you remember having met, three or four years ago, two ladies going to the Klondike with their father?”

“Yes, but what of that?”

“You gave them your photo?”

“That’s true, as I come to think of it, I did.”

“That photo is in my parlour, and the lady who got it from you is my wife.”

“Is she, really?”

“Yes, and I call it pretty good for its resemblance to the original, hey?”

The enigma was solved. The trio, father and daughters, had not gone any farther than the Stickine; but, before returning to their home in the United States, one of them had united her fate with that of the young man now standing in presence of Father Morice, who now blessed his star for having yielded to

the insistence of his lady visitor. She was momentarily away, so that he could not see her; but her husband, a most exemplary young man who acted as catechist to the forlorn Catholics of the place,<sup>15</sup> not only piloted him everywhere, but endeavoured to make as agreeable as possible his stay on the island on which was Wrangell.

This stay was rendered longer by the fact that the priest could never persuade himself to board the river boat on the occasion of her first trip up. She was crowded with shouting, singing and apparently half-intoxicated women who had come he could not guess whence, and were filling the air with their cries.

On the boat's return, Father Morice left for Telegraph Creek,<sup>16</sup> but had to pay for the time he had spent waiting by being kept nine days prisoner at the foot of a rapid, now too swollen by the late freshets to allow of the steamer ascending it. This forced delay was far from pleasant to him for more reasons than one. Not only did he thus lose time which was precious to him, but he was constantly annoyed by reports from people desirous of impressing upon him the uselessness of his attempt to do good to the Northerners. Uncertainty is painful enough to anybody: you always dislike groping in the dark, but when every one assures you that you are bent on a hopeless undertaking, this can be much worse for the mind.

Those who knew, or claimed to know, the Indians he was going to, declared that the priest had no chance of success. All the Nahanais that the minister had not gained over to his cause were irretrievably lost to Christianity, they said. They had become the victims

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<sup>15</sup> Among whom were a few French Canadians lost in that God-forsaken land.

<sup>16</sup> The place which the workmen stretching the wire for future use had reached when they heard of the success of the Atlantic cable laying.

of vice and drunkenness, and would certainly not take the trouble to as much as listen to him.

Fortunately, those sad prognostics were not to be fulfilled to the letter. In the first place, the missionary had not gone farther than Telegraph Creek, a miserable hole which certainly did not impress him very favourably, when he was agreeably surprised to hear, in the morning, the very prayers he had years before composed for his far-away Carriers fervently recited, on the top of a neighbouring hill, by a group of Indians he had never seen. These were the vanguard of the Nahanais who desired his visit. They had come to take him over to their village, some twelve miles farther north. As they had never seen a Catholic priest, one can easily understand with what child-like reverence and eagerness they received him. They helped him to the only horse they had been able to find in the whole country, and they themselves gaily tripped off on foot.

Some distance from Telegraph Creek, a rather novel sight attracted our friend's attention, a scene which revived in him his old antiquarian tastes. He had already met, in the first years of his stay among the Southern Carriers, the funeral columns containing the few human bones which had escaped the ravages of the flames in the process of the ritual cremation of the bodies.<sup>17</sup> But those were the product of native industry alone. He was now in presence of a white man's trunk resting in the forest on four posts stuck in the ground, and, when curiosity made him open it, he saw, by the side of wild bees which angrily escaped, bunches of charred bones which were evidently the result of a similar ceremony. There he had indeed the old order of things side by side with the new: cremation

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<sup>17</sup> Morice, *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*, p. 44.

of pre-European times allied to the presence of the most modern of European receptacles!

He was heartily welcomed by the Nahanais of Taltan, who had so many years awaited his coming, and looked at with considerable curiosity and interest by the others, who soon professed to regret that they had seen him so late, meaning that they would have otherwise joined his own flock.

The visitor, for he was little more, though he worked as no missionary ever worked—unless we chose to call him the “sower,” for he then laboured for others—remained nine days at Taltan, receiving the adhesion of not a few families, who thereby became his catechumens. He preached and catechized with the help of François, a most upright native, and, above all, tried to acquire as much as he could of the Nahanais language, which is quite different from the Carrier and Sékanais dialects.<sup>18</sup>

Did he study during those nine memorable days? Was poor François exhausted when he would nightly retire to his humble couch for the few hours of northern darkness?<sup>19</sup> For the love of the priest and with a view to furthering the spiritual interests of his own people, he never spared himself and certainly helped his visitor as much as he possibly could.

During the short space of time he could spare with the Taltan Indians, Father Morice translated the prayers, gathered up quite a vocabulary and the elements of a grammar, which he was later to print, with what results we will see in Chapter XI. Moreover, seeing, near the end of his stay, that his interpreter was unequal to the task of correctly rendering

<sup>18</sup> Betraying as it does the influence over it of the adjoining Coast dialect.

<sup>19</sup> Taltan is a little north of the 58th degree of latitude; hence the shortness of its nights in summer.

the ideas of the Christian faith such as that of the Trinity, Morice made bold to try his hands at it himself, and he stated their nature in the new language in such a way that everybody professed to understand what he meant.

He then set upon his way back, accompanied by most of his new friends as far as Telegraph Creek. It was a new post partially acquired to his Church, in the same way as he had inscribed on the rolls of the same the Carriers of Lhkacho, very far away, and had been the first priest to visit Fort Grahame, on the Finlay, the rendezvous of the Eastern Sékanais.

When back at his central mission of Lake Stuart, he quietly surveyed the amount of good accomplished by his untiring ministrations. The Carriers were firmer than before, and now either communicants, or preparing so to become. Their progression from a material point of view was most favourable. Their possessions, horses, cattle, and cultivated patches of potatoes, oats and barley were in excellent condition. The Babines also were now all gathered within the fold and vieing with the former on the same economic lines. Even the poor nomadic Sékanais of McLeod's Lake were making frantic, if somewhat childish, efforts at building a church, while their northern cousins of the Stickine had acquired a fair nucleus of Catholic neophytes.

Speaking of the Sékanais, especially those of the north, we are afraid we have not bestowed on them all the attention they deserve in our account of Father Morice's missionary labours. They were so hard to reach, you were so little sure to find them, that, though their pastor never neglected them, he could not have as frequent contact with them as with the Carriers and the Babines. We are not, however,

without knowledge of their inveterate nomadic habits and of their pristine innocence. What we call society and even primitive political organization were things nonexistent with them. There is no society among wild non-gregarious animals, nor are they organized with a view to commandment or subjection. With all due respect to our fellow men called the Sékanais, or Mountaineers, such were their conditions considered from the viewpoint of their relations to one another.

Formerly, they scarcely possessed the notion of a chief. The oldest, or mentally brightest, individual of a group of related hunters, he who knew how to secure the most plentiful supply of game, was the headman of one of those fractions into which the tribe was divided. On him devolved the privilege, not of commanding and being obeyed in general—authority being unknown amongst them—but of deciding on the place of the next camp in the forest, or on the mountain, how to conduct a hunting expedition and when the band was to break camp.

With them "nothing was simpler or more expeditious than the contraction of marriage. Whenever a young hunter had made up his mind on mating, with scarcely any previous courting he would in the day time simply ask the girl of his choice:

" 'Will you pack my beaver snares for me?'

"To which, if she refused him, she would make answer:

" 'No; there are plenty of women; ask another.'

"But if the maid was agreeable, she would at once answer without any conventional blushes:

" 'Perhaps, ask my mother.'

"Upon which the lad would not ask her mother, but the girl would immediately tell her about it. Then, following her parent's advice, she would hasten to erect

a branch lodge alongside their own primitive habitation, and in the evening the affianced (such was he after the proposee's answer) would, on entering it, hand her his beaver snares. Without further ceremony, they were man and wife.<sup>20</sup>

Not any more elaborate was the Sékanais mode of disposing of the dead. These were not burnt as among the Carriers and Babines; but if the band was on the move, as happened very often, the rudimentary shelter which protected the sick was, after death, lowered on his prostrate form and the people would hasten to another locality. If the deceased was an influential person, the Sékanais would wrap up his remains in furs or dressed skins, and leave them resting on a sort of scaffolding erected on the branches of two contiguous trees. Our missionary remembers seeing some of these aerial graves on the Finlay. To-day ecclesiastical burial, the blessing of a minister of religion on one's last resting place, is as highly prized of the Sékanais as was formerly a scaffold sepulture. There was a poor woman in Bear Lake who, in the heart of winter, packed several days the frozen body of her child, so as to have it interred where the missionary was to bless its grave at the time of his next visit.

Because of those visits and rather frequent commerce with the Carriers, who are regarded as in every way superior, the Sékanais men, at least those who trade at Fort McLeod, understand the language of those Indians fairly well. Yet Father Morice had to be interpreted for the sake of the women and young people. Their own dialect, not a little different, belonging as it does to the eastern division of the Déné Indians, is much less complicated, and their spiritual

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<sup>20</sup> Morice, *The Western Dénés, their Manners and Customs*, p. 122; *op. Proceedings, Canadian Institute*; Toronto, 1890.

guide understood it fairly well, though, on principle, and to be all the purer in his Carrier diction, he would not speak it. *Zaya*, a Carrier who had been adopted by the tribe after he had, long before, killed a co-tribesman he took for a caribou, was usually acting as interpreter to the priest at McLeod's Lake. There, for the lack of a church, every religious exercise had to take place round the tent of the missionary. Everything, sermons and catechizing, was therefore less formal, especially those delightful talks between pastor and flock, that is father and children, squatting on the grass round the cheerful bivouack fire of the evening. Did they listen with avidity and reverence, the poor simple folks!

And they were only working in their own interest in so doing. The thread which retained them to life was so slender! They were so little sure of the morrow! While under normal conditions their neighbours the Carriers were increasing; the Sékanais had been decreasing ever since they had been known of the whites. Famine was one of their deadly enemies, but wild beasts make also occasional victims among them, so that one who leaves on a hunting expedition is never sure to see his tent or hut again.

*Ezooh*, the swarthy shorty<sup>21</sup> who goes around, bell in hand, to call people to religious exercises, knew it only too well. He formerly had a younger brother, apparently rather childish in his ways, who went one day hunting with him. *Ezooh* was not then feeling well, and climbing up the mountain among rocks and snow, he was soon out of breath.

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<sup>21</sup> An exception to the general Sékanais type, which is thin, slender, generally tall, bony in structure and dolichocephalic, instead of brachycephalic as the Carriers. See illustration, which seems to include two Nakanais, the first and fourth (from the left) of the back row, p. 160.

"I am exhausted; let us have a rest," he said to the young man.

They had been but a few moments sitting on a stone when the latter sighted at a short distance an enormous grizzly bear, which was unaware of their presence.<sup>22</sup> Despite the entreaties of Ezooh, who was more sensible of the danger and physically unable to help, the rash Sékanais went down and sent the load of his gun into the monster's body. But what is that to a grizzly? Just enough to make him mad. With a frightful growl, the animal rushed at his aggressor and sank his terrible claws, then his long teeth, into his neck and along his chest and belly which he ripped open; then, attacking his arms, he chewed them with rage, leaving his body a shapeless mass of bloody flesh.

During Father Morice's own stay in the north, two other Sékanais met a similar end: maimed and eaten up by grizzlies—as usual, they were two young inexperienced fellows, who must have been devoid of all notions of prudence. Really good hunters know better, and attack these brutes only when well armed or with sufficient help at hand. No foolish presumption like that of Ezooh's brother, for instance, could have been laid at the doors of such a real huntsman as was the chief *Kar-ta* (Rabbit-Eyes), whom W. W. Walkem calls Cathar.<sup>23</sup> Father Morice knew him well, and claims that he was as great a chief, as far as a Sékanais can be one, as a really good Christian and a successful hunter.

The following incident is evidence of the sincere Christianity of Chief Kar-ta. He had just lost a son, whom he loved and valued as only a primitive can,

<sup>22</sup> The sight of all kinds of bears is defective, but their hearing and faculty of smelling extremely keen.

<sup>23</sup> *Stories of Early British Columbia*, pp. 238 et seq. Vancouver, 1914.

by drowning. Crazed by despair at the sight of the lifeless form, he snatched from his belt that cutlass which all hunters carry about their person, and was going to sink it into his own heart, when he suddenly remembered the priest's teaching: "Your life is not yours; woe to the suicide!"

He immediately fell on his knees and prayed for mercy.

As to his skill and success in the hunt, we base our affirmation on Mr. Walkem's own book, wherein he gives on it, as well as on his authority in venatorial matters, an incident which is decisive.

Kar-ta had invited the white man to that most difficult of all hunts, mountain sheep hunting, some distance north of Fort Grahame, on the Finlay, in a part of the chief's preserves which had not been exploited for some years. We now glean the essential parts of Walkem's account.

"The men walked up the mountain side to take the posts assigned to them by the chief, at different places along the sides of the plateau. He appeared to know the exact place where a man was likely to do the most execution when the sheep had made their wild rush to escape their cunning foes.

"The chief, who had heard great stories about my skill with the repeater . . . had a special place reserved for me. . . . I was told by the chief as he left that, in the course of half an hour or more, the sheep would rush past me for another plateau. . . . I lay concealed for an hour, and was about coming to the conclusion that the chief's plans had failed or that there were no sheep, when suddenly I heard the confused beating of hooves upon the ground. It was evidently a large band which was approaching.

"Presently they broke in sight, and at the same

time puffs of smoke could be seen and reports of guns heard in quick succession. . . . Out of seven shots I subsequently fired, I killed four, missed one and placed two bullets in one sheep before bringing him down. . . . The chief had killed a ram with the finest head I had ever seen. . . .

"Of the number of sheep killed that day I will not speak, but it must be remembered that they were . . . killed by those Indians who looked upon them as their lawful property.<sup>24</sup> But I will say in extenuation of this slaughter, it was only made once in four or five years. Catbatter, a member of this band, told me that the chief would not allow those sheep to be interfered with or shot except at long intervals".<sup>25</sup>

Now that we know something of the Sékanais, we may revert to their missionary. Many a time had this veteran of the North found himself wondering at his extraordinary contentment and happiness. His was indeed a most laborious post: such an immense district to cultivate without any help!<sup>26</sup> He had the immense satisfaction of feeling that he was doing a vast amount of good, which nobody else could accomplish, because of his knowledge of the language. At times, he was tired beyond expression, if not sick, when the date for this or that missionary journey was at hand. He never missed one, and he would generally get better on the way. On the other hand, even the very dissemination of news due to his invention of the means of communicating one's thoughts at a distance was making life

<sup>24</sup> And most rightly so, emphatically declares Father Morice.

<sup>25</sup> *Ubi supra*, pp. 240-41.

<sup>26</sup> Twice he had been given an assistant; but, in the first case, the impossibility for the young priest to as much as pronounce the sounds of the language had discouraged him, while the poor man who was afterwards sent him would have been much better left out of the district, though he no doubt meant well and was bright enough in some respects. But more of him in our eleventh chapter.

harder for him. Because of his syllabics, he was constantly in receipt of notes from the various posts under him, which were more than once a source of worry to him, and oppressed him with a still greater sense of his responsibility. In presence of all the good accomplished, however, without counting the contentment he experienced in the pursuance of his linguistic studies, he often could not help exclaiming: "Heavens! how happy I am! Surely such delights cannot last forever. Something is bound to come to mar them."

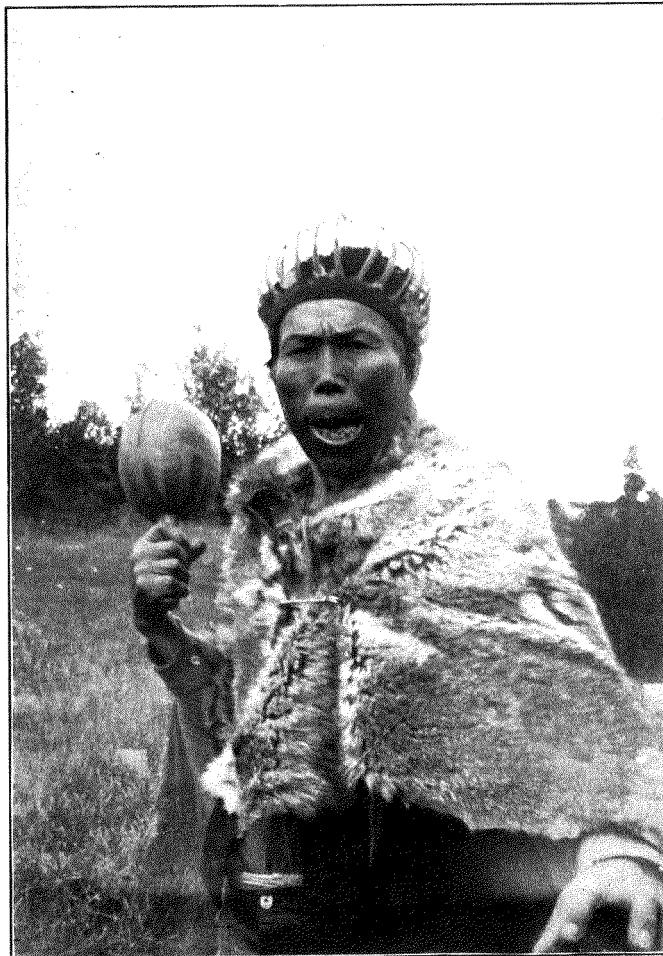
It did indeed come but too soon. Before we undertake the very much abridged recital of the trials which were then in store for him, we feel bound to show the subject of these pages from the double viewpoint of the explorer and of the writer, without which our exposé of his personality would be very far from complete.



# EXPLORING THE MOUNTAINS







*Photo by Father Morice*

A SHAMAN OR "MEDICINE MAN"

## CHAPTER VII

### EXPLORING THE MOUNTAINS

[1883-1904]

THE foregoing pages have had much to say about travelling. It is no wonder. They relate to the deeds of a missionary. Now a missionary is one who is sent out<sup>1</sup> and who, of course, acts accordingly, that is travels in order to fulfil his mission. But as could have been expected of one who always manifested so versatile tastes and dabbled in so many different ventures not necessarily connected with his priestly vocation, it was only right to imagine that he would make his travellings serve other ends than the welfare of human souls. He never saw anything wrong in having them at the same time further the interests of geographical science, and, whenever he had time or opportunity, he would not scruple either to undertake special journeys exclusively with that object in view.

Father Morice was living in a country little known outside of a few well-beaten tracks. It was not so very long since Trutch's map of British Columbia had invested the best known of the lakes of his district with the most fantastic shapes and allotted to them most generous, but greatly exaggerated, dimensions; so our missionary thought he would see for himself what others had mapped from hearsay. With this end in view, even while on his essentially ecclesiastical trips, he would often divert his route into unknown channels in order to survey new ground. There was a short season in the year, generally from the second

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<sup>1</sup> Latin *missus*; hence *missio*, English "mission."

week in September to the third in October, during which he was more at liberty to take outings through the mountains, and he would then generally improve his opportunity by scouring the country, in search of new geographical elements, accompanied by devoted Indians whose special services he deeply valued.

Morice would reproach himself with ungratefulness if he were to omit the names of at least the principal among them: Thomas Thautilh, and his elder brother, Isaac Qasyak, two excellent fellows, as well as the latter's son, John Stené, and his nephews, William and Thomas Khétloh; Hobel (Robert) and Duncan Paquette, Jean-Baptiste Sahid, and young Jean-Marie, the Sékanais, with a few others, who would do for him free of charge what they would have never attempted for money for anybody else.

The results of that new kind of exertion have been not only half a score of good-sized essays and diaries or journals, but three maps, one of which, published by the Government of British Columbia, is much more than regional in import. Another, representing Father Morice's discoveries down to 1900 and issued by the Geographical Society of Neufchâtel (Switzerland), had its merits recognized by being awarded a silver medal by such a high organization as the Geographical Society of Paris.

Apart from this distinction and a few lines in the Catholic *Who's Who*,<sup>2</sup> no recognition of his geographical work had ever come to his notice<sup>3</sup> until a Vic-

<sup>2</sup> Article Morice.

<sup>3</sup> This had been written for some time when the following, which antedates the two letters hereafter quoted from, was found among Father Morice's papers: "We had a visit recently from Major Aitken, the Board's British Columbia representative, who incidentally spoke highly of your geographic work in northern British Columbia." This is dated Ottawa, 24 July, 1928, and was written by Mr. R. Douglas, M.A., secretary of the Geographical Board of Canada.

toria (B.C.) land surveyor named Frank C. Swannell, who had very closely followed our missionary-explorer in his many wanderings, wrote him in 1928 to congratulate him on his geographical efforts.<sup>4</sup>

To enter into even a summary account of those difficulties alone would require two or three chapters like the present one. The following line from one of Mr. Swannell's letters will perhaps give a faint idea of them. Speaking of the upper course of the Bulkley River (very wrongly dubbed the Morice by Government maps), our friend's correspondent wrote: "Your legend on the upper reach '11½ hours ascent, 1½ hours descent' is very apt."

This difference between the time necessary to go up and that taken to go down the same part of a stream ought to say something to those who have a little imagination. It scarcely gives an idea of the dangers faced by the explorer and his companions. The canoe, for instance, was violently carried away into deep water at a turning of the river and bumped against the opposite shore, with the prow so far up that its stern was one inch from being swamped with its contents. One of the crew was swept off his feet by the violence of the current as he was attempting, by wading in the torrent, to help drag the craft from a dangerous place. He was drawn into deep water in which he would have surely drowned if he had not grasped a fallen tree bent from the shore over stream.

One of our engravings will illustrate some of those difficulties in about the smallest of the rivers travelled over by Father Morice.

Later, another British Columbia surveyor, Mr.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Swannell, during several seasons, has done yeoman's work in the same district, going over almost the same ground, surveying a few new regions while omitting others that were explored by Father Morice.

Dalby B. Morkill, wrote the priest in the same connection: "With other land surveyors of British Columbia (who, of necessity and choice, are explorers also to some extent), I have a deep appreciation of the splendid work which you have done in our northern country, and am glad of this opportunity to say so in an informal way. Perhaps only a surveyor appreciates to the full what work and trials are involved in turning out the map of Northern British Columbia. We are all in your debt, Sir."<sup>5</sup>

The first of these two parties asked our amateur geographer what instruments he used: a compass, a sextant, and what? No, Father Morice did not have a sextant. Yet he managed to do more accurate work than a certain surveyor whom he knew in days of yore, and who must be held responsible for the most monumental blunder ever perpetrated in that line, an error which is so very monstrous that it is unthinkable it should not yet have been corrected in official maps. Of which more anon (end of next chapter).

As to his instruments, our friend had only a chronometer watch, a telemeter, a compass and a mountain barometer, together with a sounding-line—for it must not be forgotten that, in addition to the usual geographical data furnished by maps, those of Father Morice give the depth, after actual and, at times, dangerous soundings, of many points of the lakes he explored.

To survey the coasts of a lake or the course of a river, he proceeded, compass in hand, from point to point, from turn to turn, and carefully noted on paper the readings of his instrument. In such cases the accuracy of the work depends more on the care with

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<sup>5</sup> To Father Morice, Stewart, B.C., 31 May, 1929. That Mr. Morkill, as well as Mr. Swannell, is personally a perfect stranger to Father Morice.

which the map-maker observes topographical points and records them on his field book, than on the number of the instruments he uses.

After having done a particular region, our cartographer would climb with his companions to the top of a hill or mountain, and, setting in front of himself his field drawings laid horizontally in keeping with his compass, he would ask them where was such and such a place passed by and noted on the way? The Indian is a born topographer. After a few seconds' study, his people would unhesitatingly point out the place enquired about, which indication, in practically every case, coincided with the position of that particular part of Morice's survey. People who are not familiar with the wonderful capacity of the Indians for finding their bearings will perhaps not appreciate the value of such a checking of our geographer's work. But he knew better.

Some of these mountains took considerably more than one day to climb from base to summit. Our explorer remembers, not without a thrill, the many dangers he braved in such operations. Once he was forced to desist because of his companions who felt too dizzy to continue, a circumstance which only half annoyed him, he now slyly confesses, as he was rather pleased to have an excuse for going down, being dizzy himself, but averse to admitting it. Another time he spent a night lit by brilliant stars which no tent hid from view, tied up at the waist to a sapling which grew by something like a notch, or shallow cavity, on an exceedingly steep slope, just above the tree limit.

Numerous were also the times when he found himself either in the clouds or over them. Above him was the clearest of azure skies; below, an ocean of vague and dense fog. All the material thus carefully

gathered was co-ordinated between points whose latitude had been duly determined, and thus it was that Father Morice obviated the necessity of a sextant.

It can readily be realized that, in the course of twenty-one or twenty-two years' explorations, the results of the missionary's operations were considerable. He ascended to the very source of the Black-water River and crossed the divide which separates its valley from the basin of the Pacific. He explored and mapped the important Necho River from its very mouth to its triple headwaters, namely, Lakes Morice, in the south, Dawson just north of it and Emerald still farther north. He likewise travelled over the Stuart River from mouth to source with intervening lakes (Stuart, Tremblay and Tatla) up to the Driftwood River, which, with the Tache and the Middle Rivers, form but one fluvial artery. He furthermore explored the Bulkley to its source in Loring Lake. That swift mountain stream had previously been called Morice in its upper reaches by a man who never was but many miles from the point where it receives the real Morice, a humble forest stream which is twice crossed by the telegraph trail.<sup>6</sup>

He crossed by boat, on horseback or on foot, practically the whole width of British Columbia, from the mouth of the Skeena up to Hazelton, thence to Babine, after that to Bear Lake on foot, and finally—always on foot—to Fort Grahame, within view of the Rockies and on the Finlay, which he then descended to the point where it receives the Parsnip. Going up this last river he reached the Pack, which he ascended up to McLeod's Lake. From this point he many times covered the eighty-five or ninety miles overland which separate

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<sup>6</sup> V. the end of next chapter.

it from Stuart Lake, as he also explored, up to Summit Lake and down to Giscome Portage, the chain of minor sheets of water connected together with innumerable windings of the Crooked River.

From Giscome Portage, on the upper Fraser, he, of course, went down more than once, and noted the meanders of the furious Fraser, to Fort George, Quesnel, Alexandria, and Soda Creek.

Another year, he went from Fort Babine over to Tatla Lake, which he crossed into the mining region of Vital Creek thence to the headwaters of the Nation River, mapping out and sounding as he went on Lakes Bell, Eberts, Tupper and Nation, previously known under the uniform appellation of Nation Lakes, but never surveyed before his passing along the watery chain they form.

It is useless to add how he many times rode and canoed from his headquarters near Fort St. James to Fraser Lake and French Lake, as well as St. Mary's Lake and Loon Lake, whence the Nechaco immediately issues, as he explored and mapped out not only Stuart and Babine Lakes but also minor sheets of water tributary to the same.

Will it be believed that his extreme regard for correctness, led him actually to measure the former with a rope over the ice lengthwise and across? He thus found that beautiful lacustrine piece to be thirteen miles from the Mission to Pinche (instead of the eight which the old Hudson Bay Company people granted to the distance intervening between their fort, half a mile farther, and the same Indian place), twenty-five and a half miles from the Mission to Tache and forty-one miles from the former to Yekuche, the last village on the lake, while the bay, or inlet, the lake projects into the north, close to its farthest end, is nine miles

long. In its greatest breadth, that is, just across from the rocky base of Mount Pope, it is just six miles and a quarter. In brief, to speak only of the bodies of water which Morice discovered, mapped out and sounded, not to mention those which he surveyed but were known before him, we may quote the following:—

Large lakes (between twenty and fifty miles or more in length): Morice, perhaps the most beautiful lake in British Columbia, very deep (780 feet in one place), which on one side bathes the feet of the Cascade, or Coast, range of mountains, with glittering glaciers hanging from their fastnesses and a few sonorous falls; Dawson, of tempestuous memory, though named after a mild clerical acquaintance of the discoverer; Emerald, whose name betrays the colour of its waters, and Loring, the source of the Bulkley, a submerged gap in the mountains, between the precipitous walls of which its clear waters nestle<sup>7</sup>.

We also have a few middle-sized sheets of water (fifteen miles and more) which geography owes to our clerical explorer: Lakes Le Jacq, Simonin and Loon, immediately above the course of the upper Nechaco, while smaller ones (five miles and over), the knowledge and outlines of which are due exclusively to Morice, are: Lakes Peters, Raft and Knapp, south of French Lake; Vowell, just north of the same; Lucas, between

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<sup>7</sup> Acting on the well-known principle that one who discovers a hitherto unknown geographical element is allowed to christen it, even though he may not have surveyed, mapped or (in the case of a lake) sounded it, Father Morice, who did all that in addition to the mere act of discovery, named the various sheets of water which he incontestably was the first white man to see and make known to geography. Owing to the monumental blunder previously alluded to and explained at some length near the end of our next chapter, an attempt has since been made to change his nomenclature. But he begs to stick to his rights, which are the rights of priority: an error is not qualified to alter a right, and he fails to see how what has been rightly and properly done should be changed just to make it agree with what is wrong.

the headwaters of the Necho and St. Mary's Lake, as well as Lakes Hehn and Fingers, south of Stony Creek and forming the double head of Mud River.

We will abstain from mentioning the numerous mountains discovered by our explorer in the course of his travellings, some of which he personally climbed while he ascertained the altitude of others by sending up Indians with his barometer.

Those geographical acquisitions and some others were consigned on the original map which he published in 1907, through the kind offices of the British Columbia Government. In this connection, it is only right to say that, such as printed, this cannot claim quite the same degree of excellence as Morice's original manuscript. In the first place, its scale was reduced (owing, they contended, to the size of their stone), and then the various itineraries of the author, which were intended to distinguish what he knew *de visu* and had himself surveyed from what he marked down from hearsay, were omitted.

Apart from his maps Father Morice published a number of accounts of his voyages, of which we have four before us as we write.<sup>8</sup> We happen to know that he had also many letters and diaries connected with the subject of this chapter in a quarterly review of his Order to which we cannot have access. As it is, we are none the less in a position to invite the reader to accompany him in portions of two of his exploring expeditions. We commence by one which had the double object of

<sup>8</sup> Namely the 1895 Diary of his trip to Bear Lake, up the Driftwood and then overland to Fort Grahame, incorporated in his *Le Pays des Ours Noirs*; his 1899 Diary, published along with other matter under the title *Du Lac Stuart à l'Océan Pacifique*; the account of his very last exploratory journey, *Exploration de la Rivière Bulkley* (1904), published, like the preceding, by the Neufchâtel Société de Géographie, and his brochure on *The Northern Interior of British Columbia and its maps*, issued, in 1918, by the Royal Canadian Institute, of Toronto.

providing religious ministrations to the northern Sékanais, and of reconnoitring a part of the country which had never been trodden by the foot of man, let alone mapped by anybody. This little excursion will suffice to give us an idea of his explorations, though most of these were by canoe instead of on foot, as we shall see by the diary which is to follow this first account.

At the end of Babine Lake, he was told that Bear Lake could be reached by an easy and much more direct route than *via* the Driftwood River, which had to be poled up. So, on a fine Monday morning, after he had given the usual religious exercises to the Babines, he left to repeat the same on behalf of the Sékanais—whereby we see that, while an explorer, he remained none the less a missionary. His companions are worth being introduced to us. They were a stalwart middle-aged man called *Sahid*, a matter-of-fact Indian of but few words, a young, naïve and almost child-like Sékanais, Jean-Marie, and another youth who was partially of Nahanaïs descent.

All went well, on foot and packing the party's impedimenta of which the priest carried but a very small part, until they had to penetrate the trailless portion of the forest. Then the ups and downs, the walking along fallen trees bridging over cavities in the ground, from which the white man,—our clerical explorer—little accustomed to such gymnastic exercises, often fell off, the incessant jumping over similar obstacles to immediately sink into hidden mud or holes, commenced to make progress a matter of the greatest difficulty. In a short time the missionary's clothes were not a little damaged by the undergrowth and torn by thorns, while his feet were blistered and made to bleed by unexpected falls into rocky pits hidden by

treacherous moss and other growth. Things finally came to such a pass that, for a while, they had to descend to the very edge of the torrent which came dancing and vociferating over the stones of its bed. To make a long story short, after having thus groped their way tumbling and slipping every now and then for three days, the priest felt quite feverish as he camped in the densest part of the forest on Wednesday night.

An informal little consultation had to be held, and, at the suggestion of the clergyman, it was decided to change the course so far followed and make for a gigantic range of white mountains, a glimpse of which they had caught the previous day, when the party, having lost its bearings, had fallen on an immense swamp. So up and up they went on the morrow, until, a little after ten in the morning, they suddenly emerged into the open, that is just above the tree limit<sup>9</sup> and at the foot of the snow-covered range, for which they had been making since the morning of that day.

What a relief! No more tree trunks to jump over or to walk along and fall from, they (or at least the priest) thought! The exultation was, however, of short duration. Soon claps of thunder announced a storm, which drenched them to the bones and rendered their packs much heavier, by getting wet for the lack of any shelter. On and on they trudged, crawling along the almost wall-like slopes of the mountain, sometimes crossing, 4,000 feet above their torrential river, immense bands of hardened snow in which they had to cut, with an axe, holes for the feet, as they were hung up in the ravines they filled in at an angle of perhaps 80 degrees.

A detail, the importance of which will escape most

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<sup>9</sup> Which is at that latitude about 5,200 feet above sea level.

of our readers, is this: The white man's shoes having become thoroughly wet during the storm, and being continually used sidewise against a very steep slope, had been put out of shape while soft. Now that they had dried and hardened in that state, they pinched his feet in an excruciating way. To somewhat mitigate the consequent agony, they went farther up, to the very top of the range, from which, they had a veritable map of the country unfolded at their feet. The explorer himself describes it:—

"Pending the return of my two companions, I contemplate the wild beauty of our American country," he writes. "It is a real ocean of mountains, that region into which we have painfully penetrated: Fortresses with battlemented ramparts, Gothic or Byzantine cathedrals solidified by robust buttresses, colossal saws which cleave the clouds, gigantic pyramids perhaps as old as those stars towards which they raise their white summits, immense rounded cones clad with perpetual snows which, through the reflected rays of the sun, glitter as so many balloons sprinkled over with diamond dust, our mountains assume all those forms, attire themselves in every one of those ornaments."<sup>10</sup>

We are now brought to the afternoon of Saturday. Tired out and exhausted beyond description—at least the priest is, for though much more heavily loaded, his men scarcely feel the fatigue—we are now confronted by two remarkable incidents, which may perhaps tax the credulity of some readers, though Father Morice is quite positive about the least detail of them.

For some time, almost ready to give out at any moment, the white traveller had been lagging so far behind his companions that, to prevent his getting lost, the youngest of the party, Jean-Marie, had been

<sup>10</sup> *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*, pp. 272-73.

deputed to serve him as a guide, that is keep in sight of him, while the two others would try their hands at shooting marmots for the next meal. A big gap in the range having been reached and a change of direction becoming necessary, Jean-Marie had seated himself on his heavy pack, just on the top of a precipice, and was waiting for the priest who, he felt, could not guess which way he had to turn. After the latter had himself enjoyed a little rest by his side, he wanted, before going down, to mark on his note-book the altitude of that point, but could not find his mountain barometer. After having long looked for it all around, aided by Jean-Marie's lynx eyes:

"I see, I must have dropped it at our last halt way up," he said. "Come and help me find it there."

Despite the combined efforts of the couple, no instrument could be seen anywhere. They eagerly sought it all the way back: nothing could be found. After which, because of the time lost in the search, the young man wanted the missionary to resume his march, unable as he was to realize the importance of what he called his "little box." After further efforts at finding it, absolutely out of patience, the Indian refused to help any longer and sat on his pack pouting and sulking.

Meantime, Sahid, who was now wondering at the delay and feared lest an accident had overtaken the priest, came back from his hunt, and, from the bottom of the abyss, shouted to ascertain what could the matter be. He was told by Jean-Marie, now in very bad humour.

"That's true," said Father Morice; "come up, look for it as you climb and help me find it!"

The big man came up in zigzags, with an eye constantly on the ground for the lost "little box." After

further efforts at finding it in the company of the priest all without any practical results:

"You see," reasoned Sahid, "the sun is getting low. We must go if we are to prepare camp for the night and to-morrow, since you never travel on Sundays, and it is still far to a place on the timber limit."<sup>11</sup>

The priest looked at his watch: He had spent one hour and a quarter in a vain search, and Sahid was right, yet he could not resign himself to the prospect of leaving his barometer perhaps not so very far from where they stood.<sup>12</sup>

He remembered suddenly that Catholics pray to St. Anthony of Padua for the recovery of lost objects. He inwardly prayed to him, and promised that he would say his first Mass at the Sékanais camp in his honour if he made him find what he wanted within five minutes. Then, while Jean-Marie was pouting like a child, he showed Sahid what he meant over the dial of his watch.

"Just five minutes more of search and we go," said he.

Turning their back on the sulky young Sékanais the older couple went off, scanning every little cavity in the rocks, when, perhaps two minutes later, Jean-Marie suddenly cried out:

"There it is; I see it shining in the sun!"

The precious little instrument was lying at the bottom of the abyss! "Who found it? Surely not Jean-Marie, who would not look for it, nor the priest or Sahid

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<sup>11</sup> That is, where dry wood could be found as well as boughs to sleep on. As to water, the clearest kind of it is almost everywhere available on the slopes of these snow-covered mountains.

<sup>12</sup> Inasmuch as that little instrument was the gift of a kindly surveyor who had met him in the course of his peregrinations.

who were seeking it elsewhere, but good St. Anthony," assures Father Morice.

Immediately, as the sun was setting behind the mountains, the trio marched off at a great speed, so much so, indeed, that in no time the poor missionary was left behind, with no guide in sight to go by. Presently, the lonely wayfarer reached a sandy ravine descending to the river from a fragment of glacier hanging up on top. To understand what then happened, it must be said that the main bulk of that glacier had apparently somehow detached itself from its upper end and, darting down with tremendous force, had ripped and deepened the surface of the ravine which, for a wonder, was there of a sandy nature. This was of as light and movable material as the whole was steep. Where could the Indians have crossed it?

The forlorn traveller went down, then up, in search of their tracks; but to no purpose. Then, as it was getting late, he had to resign himself to the most perilous undertaking of his life. Taking his courage in both hands, he attempted to run across the edges of the almost perpendicular ravine. In less time than it takes to write it, he found himself hanging between heaven and earth, four thousand feet above the raging torrent in the valley, and convulsively clutching a stone, which most providentially emerged a little from the gravelly surface. . . .

He had slipped, sending down clouds of sand too soft to hold him, until he had caught hold of that most welcome stone.

And now what was he to do? He begged for his life of God and, after some hesitation and fervent prayer, frantically rushed to the other side. Having reached this, somewhat lower down, he cowered on the

cold ground with big drops of sweat trickling down his face.

Much against our will, we must now abridge our narration. At Bear Lake the missionary gave but a short retreat to what had remained of the Sékanais who had congregated there, by the miserable little church which had been built for them. As he was a few days behind time, owing to the unexpected difficulties of the way, some had despaired of his coming and, being short of provisions, had left to return to their mountain fastnesses, while the others were not much better off from an economic standpoint.

They had become too destitute to help their spiritual guide with food for his return,<sup>13</sup> so he had to climb a mountain near by in quest of marmots, while he hoped not only to ascertain its height by scaling its peak, but also to get therefrom such a good view that he could map out the region over which it was towering.

How we wish we had room left us to relate in detail how this was climbed,<sup>14</sup> and to what extent its heather-covered sides provided him with game for his return home! Especially would we like to tell how, despite Jean-Marie's little tricks to mislead him into summits of more easy access, Father Morice, for whose life the kind-hearted Sékanais feared, did ultimately reach the coveted height, or very little below. The whiteman had arrived just at the base of some kind of rocky column, the peak, and despaired of going farther when, of a sudden, Jean-Marie, who had so far discouraged him as much as he could in his ambitious plan, appeared on top of it, and, waving his hat:

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<sup>13</sup> As this is normally done in similar cases.

<sup>14</sup> It was so steep in places that it could not be ascended without one's knees touching its side.

"How beautiful!" he cried out. "From here one can see the whole world. Come up and see for yourself."

This was more easy to say than to do. A Sékanais is a mountain goat: he penetrates where no white man can follow; yet, yielding to his urging and that of a companion who was now standing by his side, the priest allowed the ropes of the party<sup>15</sup> to be made fast to his waist and, while the two Indians on top were pulling him up, a third one seconded their efforts by pushing him on.

Once on top, down went the priest's head as he tried to survey the country below. The column-like peak was not more than seven or eight feet across, and on one side the whole mountain had a sheer perpendicular fall of over 5,000 feet into an unknown green lake! Impossible for our friend to stand up like his companions, who were heartily laughing at his apparent fright. All he could do was to take the altitude of the mountain: 7,600 feet!

On his way down, he had a still more serious escape. Having descried one of those immense bands of hardened snow, which fill in quasi-perpendicular ravines, he, against the advice of his companions, thought of notably shortening his route to the timber line by using it to go down. He slipped off too soon, however, and, in his precipitate progress down the snowy band, almost grazed a big rock emerging from the icy sheet against which he would have been killed if he had fallen on it.

"Have you ever seen burning ice?" he uses to ask people. "Not only have I seen red snow,"<sup>16</sup> but I have felt ice that burned."

<sup>15</sup> Those which served to tie up the packs of each one of the party.

<sup>16</sup> The result, probably, of myriads of animalcules of that colour mixed with the snow. This is then blood red.

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He then explains that the friction on hands and elbows, as you endeavour to moderate the speed of your glide down by using them as brakes, generates a heat in those parts of the body which one cannot stand any length of time.

# ON AND ABOUT WATER



## CHAPTER VIII

### ON AND ABOUT WATER

[1895-1903]

THE JOURNEY related in our preceding chapter has taken us to a point north of the 56th degree of latitude, some 220 miles north of the central Mission of the district. To put the reader in a position to form an even more adequate idea of Father Morice's explorations, we will now invite him to part of a trip into a quite different region, leading to the discovery of the beautiful lake, not far from  $53^{\circ}$ , which now bears his name.<sup>1</sup> We will reproduce, greatly abridged, part of the explorer's journal, the full text of which can be found<sup>2</sup> in his book *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*.

We have reached Cambie Lake,<sup>3</sup> which is already known to geographers, and, having travelled over land, and by water on other lakes, we have counted on the canoe of an Indian whom we expect to find here. Unfortunately this is much too small for priest and companions, Thomas Thautih, John Stené and William Khétloh. Moreover, were it of the proper size, its owner, *Nakhon*, a native of distant Rocher Déboulé who is not yet baptized, could not well lend it, since our itinerary would take it to a place whence he could not recover it, and he has himself no other means of going home.

*September 16, 1895:* Since we cannot have Nakhon's canoe, the only thing left us is to make one ourselves. We therefore hollow out a poplar tree which we have felled on the bank of a little tributary of Cambie Lake.

*September 17:* My men have done such strenuous work

<sup>1</sup> Or at least should, if the rights of discovery, surveying and mapping, no less than priority of publication, have any value at all in Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 291 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> The Indians' *Yootsoo*, the Government's *Ootsa*.

that the canoe is nearing completion when they return to the river this morning. At ten in the forenoon one of them comes to tell me that Thomas has so badly cut his foot with the axe that all work has become impossible to him. This is bad news, as we are already on rather short commons.

At 2 p.m., all the workmen come back with unwelcome intelligence. In their hurry, the canoe they had finished has split from end to end under the too great pressure of a cross-bar they were forcing in with a view to widening it. Two days work for nothing! A hole in our larder with no corresponding advantage! Moved by our ill-luck, Nakhon generously parts in our behalf with his little canoe.<sup>4</sup>

As if to get a foretaste of what is awaiting us, we have not gone far on Cambie Lake when we are assailed by a terrible tempest<sup>5</sup> which puts us on the brink of perdition. In a very short time, our tiny craft is full of water and our things wet.

At the end of the lake, we enter one of three branches of a fine river which falls into the same and which I call the Dawson, after a friend of mine in England. We are now pioneering, as no white man has ever preceded us in these parts. Killed one duck, and at night camp on a little lake formed by an expansion of the stream. This will henceforth be Sinclair Lake.<sup>6</sup>

*September 18:* Getting out of Sinclair Lake we are stupefied to remark that the river, yesterday so wide and so deep, is now shallow and full of weeds, through which shoals of fish frisk about and disport themselves at our approach in a most lively way. Soon all progress becomes impossible. What can the matter be? Upon examination, we realize

<sup>4</sup> The inland aborigines have two kinds of canoes: one for lake travelling, as large as they can make it out of a poplar tree, and one, much smaller, for hunting purposes. Nakhon's belongs to the last category.

<sup>5</sup> Which was felt all over the country. A big canoe, which Father Morice had used on French Lake and was being taken back to Fraser Lake, capsized and its tenants went to the bottom, though they ultimately saved themselves. On Stuart Lake the Hudson's Bay Company's schooner was tossed about by the furious waves as she was taking back Mr. Loring and family, and her two anchors got broken so that they had to let her drift aground on the sand of the beach.

<sup>6</sup> After the man at the head of the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Fraser Lake.

that we have ventured into a *cul-de-sac*, or blind alley, which we descend and ultimately find the real river.

A trifle before noon, its shores suddenly recede from one another, the horizon widens in front of us, and is soon barred in the distance by a gigantic white wall: the Coast range of mountains! We have reached an important lake—a bewitched lake, soon say my Indians. Look at the frightful squalls which belabour its surface, creating furious waves with no fixed direction, but which fight with one another, as their language has it, while, yonder, a tornado originating in a red cliff on the northern shore, wheels through the air vermillion-like dust over the boiling waves of the lake, a sight the like of which my companions, all dismayed, claim they never saw.

From what we have been told, we should cross it; but who would be rash enough to make the attempt in such conditions? Let us go on; it will perhaps become narrower. Just the contrary happens: it is now wider than ever! Silently and quietly my men, apparently discouraged, land on the beach and pray to be allowed to camp and give the lake time to calm down.

But we are short of provisions. Looking across, we guess by the conformation of the ground that the short portage which is said to unite this lake to another must be just at the foot of yonder hill. Something impels me on, and in my rashness I coax my crew into trying to reach it.

"Pray for us as we go on," they say starting out; "we would not do that for any other white man. We take our lives into our hands."

How they paddle, the poor dear fellows! We are tossed about on the waves as if our craft was but a nut-shell. Yet, in the very middle of the lake, I have the heart to tell them to stop, and, sending down my 645 foot sounding-line I find no bottom!

It is dark when we land, all wet and one of us without his hat which an audacious wave has carried away. We must now pass part of the night drying our blankets in which we lie down while still half wet. Yet we are happy: we have safely gone through one of the most dangerous steps of our lives. We have saved more than half a day by crossing before the night, and one of us has found the portage

bars, or skids, of the canoe trail. We are therefore at the very place towards which we were tending.

*September 19:* Hard frost last night, sent us probably by the vicinity of the mountains; so much so, indeed, that our blankets, only half dried yesterday, laid over us stiff this morning. After having dragged<sup>7</sup> our little canoe a distance of about one mile and a quarter we launch it on the waters of a new lake, somewhat rounded in shape, which I call St. Thomas, in honour of my chief companion. But as we get across, we realize that we have had but part of it in front of us.

We double a cape, and have on our right a considerable expanse of water, bordered on the west by the same gigantic wall of snow and ice as Lake Dawson. Oh! the beautiful sparkling glaciers hanging down the slope of the mountain range, the musical, if somewhat monotonous, humming of the cascades in the distance!

Proceeding towards the south, we go through a detroit where my line finds a depth of 385 feet of the purest water one can imagine, and, as we emerge therefrom, we stand in admiration of the grandest and most beautiful lake we have ever seen. It is not only long, but wide, at least twelve miles, as yonder rocky point which we at first took for a promontory is a real big island, the "island on which a bear escapes from people," according to its Indian name.

But a storm is brewing at the horizon; squalls succeed squalls, and even snow is commencing to fall. Let us land on that fine sandy beach south-east of Big Bear Island.

*September 20:* This sheet of water is altogether too important, and Thomas insists that my name, not his, be given it. After leaving its central expanse, we enter some sort of strait, apparently a gap in the ground now filled with water. It seems deep; down goes a new line: 780 feet! A lake is generally the deepest where narrowest, at least between two wide stretches of water.

Evening approaches, after a day well employed in tracing on paper the various bays and points of the lake. It is

<sup>7</sup> A portage, as expressed by that word, which was originally a French one, is a place through which a canoe is carried (Fr. *porté*), a process which is practicable only in the case of the birch bark craft of the East, but impossible with the wooden embarcations of the West.



*Photo by F. C. Swannell, L.S.*

**SEKANAIS HEADMEN**



*Photo by F. C. Swannell, L.S.*

**THE FALLS BETWEEN LEJACQ AND SIMONIN LAKES**

On to which Father Morice unwittingly glided.



somewhat late when we attain the end of Morice Lake and are borne off by its outlet. Shortly after, we fall upon a smaller though fairly long lake, to which I give the name of Le Jacq, that of my worthy predecessor at Stuart Lake Mission. Owing to the time we have lost in uselessly making a canoe, and because of the magnitude of Morice Lake, we are now getting short of provisions, and must try our luck at fishing, though we know quite well that the water of these mountain lakes is much too clear, too free of animal or vegetable substances, to contain much fish. We land and set our nets for the night.

*September 21:* Thirteen fishes in our nets this morning. We did not expect so many. The weather is cold, the wind icy, though we are visibly receding from the vicinity of the mountains. Snow, which is constantly falling, hinders my amateur surveying, while my crew are tired and sigh after the Necho River, of which we guess that Morice and Le Jacq lakes must be the headwaters. At last we reach the end of the lake; we can now advance along its outlet without paddling too hard. But what is that deafening uproar which we hear?

"Get up, John, and see what the matter can be."

"Heavens! The river disappears . . . To the shore, quick . . ."

We were on top of a fall in the river! (See illustration.) Having hurriedly landed, we portage our impedimenta, as well as the canoe, and camp just below the fall, whose continuous roaring would help us to sleep if fatigue was not enough to do as much. My men are sad and dejected. Not expecting such obstacles in their way, they imagine that we must be lost and that the stream on which we camp leads into the sea, despite the fact that my compass and the tracings of my field-book assure me that, from Cambie Lake to the spot we have reached, our itinerary has been in the form of a perfect horse-shoe. We are now, therefore, making directly for Fraser Lake, our point of departure where we have to return.

*Sunday, September 22:* Nothing to eat, no fish here. My crew have among themselves just a small one, which they found yesterday floating dead on the surface of the water. We cannot for that reason, observe the Lord's Day rest.

After innumerable difficulties in the river, shallow and full of stones, through which we have at times to drag our canoe led by one man wading in the water, the stream becomes fairly navigable, soon after which we enter a new lake, the third of the series.

"It is from this that the Necho flows; I recognize it," says Thomas, who professes to have seen it in childhood.

Hope returns to all hearts, inasmuch as a fair wind allows us to set up a sail which greatly helps my paddlers. Everyone is now sure that this is the last lake, after which the current of the Necho will almost relieve us of the necessity of handling the paddle. Who would not be pleased at the prospect? So hard to exert one's self without eating!

While we entertain those rosy thoughts, behold the horizon widens again in front of us. What can it be?

"Well, nothing but a new lake," exclaims John, disgusted.

Now the only Fraser Lake individual who professed to have ever visited these parts has mentioned only three lakes to traverse before we get to the Necho! Surely, we are out of our way, claim again my crew. Yet they paddle on and sail till evening, when we near the end of that mysterious, and to us supernumerary, sheet of water.

We camp and, in spite of the reassuring testimony of my compass, my faithful men are sad and silent (a bad sign with the Indians), as they lie at night on the spruce boughs which stand to them in lieu of a bed.

*September 23:* On the Necho at last! Impossible to doubt it: the stream is wider, deeper and especially swifter.<sup>8</sup> So swift, indeed, that it now becomes dangerous of navigation. Shall I describe the extreme violence of the current at a particular winding where, in spite of our efforts, our canoe almost bumps against a rocky shore plunging into very deep black water? Shall I mention the terrible succession of rapids which afterwards absolutely interrupt navigation for about seven miles? No kind of embarkation could possibly wend its way through their rocks and billows.

<sup>8</sup> It was found to be 11 feet deep just at its place of issue from the last lake, but is much deeper in most places. Remember the season: end of September.

We therefore leave our canoe, and onward for St. Mary's Lake! We have not eaten since day before yesterday: all the greater reason for hastening to where we know that we will be welcomed and hospitably entertained. We camp on the outlet of a little lake, which I call Murray, in honour of the Hudson's Bay Company's *bourgeois* at Stuart Lake.

*September 24:* Having crossed the lake, we walk on and on, with our packs which hunger renders still more heavy. At last we come in sight of the village, where we are received with enthusiasm and regarded as heroes. (V. illustr. p. 184.)

So much for Father Morice's journal. We may add on our own account that the reader should not wonder too much at the lionizing of the party by the good folk of St. Mary's Lake. They could not understand how the explorers could have escaped with their lives from the wrath of the terrible inhabitants of, for instance, Dawson Lake: Gigantic monsters, so they said, big as islands, with young ones the size of Hudson Bay Company barges, which are the real cause of the extraordinary perturbations in its waters, whenever any stranger is bold enough to venture upon them.

Again, along the steep banks of Morice Lake, did not the travellers remark the tracks of the colossal snakes, whose scales are like large beaver skins, which haunt those remote quarters?

The clergyman missed those terrible animals ("probably because he was a priest," explained the natives), but he vividly remembers the unwelcome effects of a strong wind made to whirl about by the particular conformation and orientation of the mountains which border it.

Strange as it may seem, though he could not swim a yard, Father Morice never felt uneasy on lake or river. He had been sailing on Babine Lake with a side wind which, at times, would threaten to overturn his craft. He and his crew watched for the squall to come,

and immediately threw the whole weight of their bodies on the same side of the canoe, in an effort to counterbalance the effects of the wind. It must, be admitted that there was a second or two of suspense, a feeling of something resembling uneasiness: Would they prevail or would not the storm ultimately have the upper hand?

It was a dangerous game; but, with his usual optimism, our friend to-day remarks that, he did not take too great chances since . . . he is still alive.

Nor was he more fearful when he travelled by raft, that is, when only a few dry logs separated him from the element which might, at any time, have caused his death. He did this on both lakes and streams. On his map, there is the name of a particular lake which he crossed, and of a river he followed by that rather slow mode of locomotion. In the last case, he was even exceedingly pleased to resort to it. He had been seven days trudging on foot through the forest and bush which separate the basin of Bear Lake, by  $56^{\circ} 10'$ , from the Finlay River, a trip abounding in great hardships but, naturally, not altogether free of adventures or devoid of curiosities.

To speak of these last, we would say that, about 25 miles from the former place, the party had passed by what the Indians call *Oosacho*, the Big Kettle. This has in reality the shape of a large well, five or six feet across, so perfectly round that the wall, eight or ten inches thick, which stands on the outside perhaps four feet above the surrounding ground and inside three or four below, seems to have been turned with a lathe. This wonderful wall is made in one piece of some red material which must have been at one time in fusion and become solidified by cooling. It is now as hard as the hardest rock, and the same must be said of some

kind of a pool of an identical material, which seems to have flowed out of the well in the remote past and stretches out of it some fifty or sixty feet. Marks of original fluidity or at least flaccidity are still visible on its surface, but the whole has long been petrified.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from the extraordinarily regular circularity of its wall, the most remarkable particularity in connection with this strange well, or kettle, is the lethiferous gas or effluvia which its bottom emits. Whatever living being passes over, or penetrates into, its perimeter remains there and dies. Bending for a moment over its red parapet to scan its inside, the priest and companions (Chief Kar-ta, Duncan, Hobel and another) saw, strewn on its bottom, all kinds of birds and small animals, the largest of which was a ground-hog.

Close to the "Big-Kettle" flows the upper reach of the Omineca River,<sup>10</sup> famous in the annals of British Columbia gold mining. It is not there very deep, of course. Therefore, as it had rained all the forenoon and the priest was quite wet, he boldly waded through it while his charitable companions were asking one another who was to carry him across.

Later on, it was, in several cases, to be on the broad shoulders of Robert, *alias* Hobel, not very tall but stouter than the others (at least so said Duncan), that this honour was to devolve. The very obliging fellow accepted with good grace the task imposed on him, except one day when he was confronted by a swift torrential river which he deemed too deep for his size. He then offered the honour to a taller man. They all pretexted some excuse, however:

<sup>9</sup> The ground is there sloping; hence the apparent flowing, at a time when the matter must not have been very liquid, for it did not go very far.

<sup>10</sup> Or rather in Sékanais: *Omenékhak*, river that overflows.

weak legs or dizziness in rapid water, while the really tall man was a chief, Kar-ta, too old to be mentioned in connection with such a job. Hobel had therefore to submit.

It was a very hot afternoon. To add to his stature, Hobel covered his shoulders with the filled-in wallet of a burden-carrying dog<sup>11</sup> which was accompanying the party, and over this the clergyman sat as best he could, steadyng himself by holding his own carrier's head. Then the Indian seized a big long stick, with which he protected himself against the violence of the current. He had not gone two yards in the stream when the priest's hands and face were literally grey with mosquitoes. Heavens! What an itch! Could any one stand those hundreds of needles in his flesh? One of his torturers must have been exceptionally venomous in its sting, for it caused its victim to lose patience. Pan! pan! went the white man's hands over his face and against one another, when suddenly:

"Keep quiet, or I throw you into the river," shouted Hobel, who could not proceed with his load without the greatest caution, and was constantly exposed to the danger of being carried away by the violence of the torrent, especially, he declared, as the pebbles of its bed were very slippery.

"And there are some who imagine they know mosquitoes!" now remarks Father Morice with a wry face.

Mosquitoes must not make us forget our raft. The missionary was exhausted with fatigue after almost a whole week's walking through the dense northern forest, when he was told by the chief, who alone knew the country, that they had reached the valley of a river which, flowing in the direction of the point they

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Morice, *Notes. . . on the Western Dénés*, p. 148.

were then making for, they were going to utilize by floating down its swift waters. That was indeed a sweet announcement! The welcome rest, the luxurious travelling, even if it was only on a raft! Two of them were quickly prepared, one of four logs, for the priest and the baggage, the other of three, each one having its component parts fastened to a cross-bar fore and stern, and being manned by two men standing up at either end, pole in hand, to steer and guard it against any possible obstacle in the river. This was a good-sized stream and extremely rapid. How beautifully were the trees which border it on either side fleeing backwards! They made you think of a railway train! And then how comfortable it was to think that the distance thus covered meant as many miles spared the poor legs of the wayfarers! (See illustr. p. 248.)

Difficulties are the daily bread of the explorer; they must crop up everywhere. About half-way down, a confused noise, some kind of a rumbling sound resembling that of distant thunder, which became clearer and clearer as Morice's party advanced, warned them of some trouble ahead: a fall, a canyon, or something which might easily prove fatal to such an unwieldy means of locomotion as a raft. In such cases, prudence is the most useful of virtues.

A few minutes and they saw in the distance the cause of the uproar: a sea of white-crested waves, the result, apparently, of many reefs in the river. The navigators land, and depute one of their number, Duncan, to study the situation and report.

Fifteen minutes later, he returned with a long face, and announced in no uncertain tones that it was impossible to go through the obstacle. With many terrifying gestures, he described the size and ways of the waves, which were caused, he said, not only by the

innumerable rocks with which the bed of the stream bristled, but by the rushing into it of a swift tributary, which drives on the water of the main stream and thus creates all kinds of conflicting currents.

Duncan was a half-breed, and, as such, had the reputation of exaggerating danger. Perceiving that the priest's countenance bespoke incredulity:

"You see, Father," he said, "we Indians never shoot such a rapid even with a canoe."

"What is to be done, then?" asked the former.

"Abandon our rafts and continue on foot," he declared.

In a minute all the difficulties of the way which they have had to contend against passed before the mental vision of the white man, and not only did he rebel against the prospect of resuming such a drudgery, but he made bold to confess his extreme repugnance for such a course. Which seeing, Duncan observed, not without solid reasons, that a sharp-edged stone suffices to cut asunder one of the ropes which hold the pieces of the rafts together, a mishap which would be likely to send them to eternity.

Suddenly Kar-ta exclaimed, with great faith:

"We are with the priest. He will protect us. At any rate, we all have to die once—to-day, or to-morrow, it does not make much difference."

Then they went through the midst of an uproar so terrific that it almost drowned the voice of the steersmen shouting their warnings. They cut through the waves<sup>12</sup> which, of course, wet everything, and were almost hurled against a barrage of rocks, which they avoided miraculously. They were safe, however, in spite of Duncan's direful prognostics.

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<sup>12</sup> It goes without saying that a raft cannot be borne by the waves as a canoe, or any other "recipient."

All the party had to do was to dry up in the evening what had been wetted by the billows. Thank God, there was wood in the country (scarcely anything else). They had kept their matches dry, and the next day was Sunday. Without transgressing the law of the Dominical rest, they easily remedied the harm done by the waves. In the afternoon the travellers rejoiced at the thought that, during only part of one day, they must have covered at least forty-five miles, the equivalent of two good days' walk, and their limbs, moreover, had a little rest.

Such were some of Father Morice's journeys in quest of souls and geographical lore. What we have said of them suffices to show that, in common with his prototype Saint Paul, he was often enough "in perils of the waters" as well as in other dangers. Of course, were we to attempt a relation of all the difficulties he went through on lake and river, we would have to recall many others of his experiences.

We might, for instance, exhibit him almost hurled down a sixty-foot fall in a stream which, placid enough in normal times, had been swollen almost to torrential swiftness by the spring freshets. All he had to do was to cross that stream and resume his trip on horseback. But such was the vehemence of the current that, unable to control his unwieldy raft, his companion had to jump into the water, which fortunately happened to be not quite beyond his depth. He then took hold of the rickety craft, which he painfully landed across by sheer strength of arm, perhaps fifty feet above the fall.

Sometimes the danger was in rivers that no human giant could ford, as once happened when his two companions, taking in but too late the real state of a rapid in the Nechoço, dashed through the worst part of it,

crying: "We are lost!" only to come out of wave and spray drenched as ducks, but alive and well except for the harm done their impedimenta by the furious billows.

Such accidents, however, are rare. The Indians, as a rule, are most excellent canoemen. And no wonder, since, strange as it may appear, they perceive the least obstacle in the water, seeing through it as we do through glass, or realizing by the peculiar motions of the waves the real situation and bearings of rocks in the stream. Then a skilful stroke of the paddle fore or aft prevents all shocks or contact with the canoe, while at the same time it gives the embarkation the direction most propitious to its safety and smooth running.

There are, therefore, few obstacles, short of a regular fall or actual barrage, which a Carrier or Babine—not a Sékanais, who is a denizen of the mountains—will not overcome. There are, indeed, among white *couteurs de bois*, yarns to the effect that their canoe, in this or that place, shot down clear out of the water to fall several feet lower in the stream. Father Morice boasts no such feats, nor does he believe in them, but he has several times run through a particular spot on the lower Stuart River, called the Cascade, where one's canoe is felt to suddenly fall quite perceptibly.

Leaving him now to his explorations by land and water, we beg to offer a few remarks on some of their results, which may be considered in the light of a connecting link between this chapter and the next. They still refer to geography, yet are based on some of Father Morice's writings.

"By about  $52^{\circ} 20'$  N. latitude, the Bulkley receives from the east an insignificant tributary which is twice

crossed by the line of the Dawson telegraph, and which Poudrier<sup>13</sup> gave out as being none other than the Bulkley, applying at the same time my own name to the upper part of the main stream itself!"

Thus wrote our missionary explorer in his *Northern Interior of British Columbia and Its Maps*,<sup>14</sup> thereby calling attention to an unfortunate blunder he had already pointed out when he wrote: "A blind man standing there [at the confluence of the two rivers] could not have fallen into such a gross error: the sound of the angry billows in the main stream would have rendered impossible any hesitation as to whence it flowed."<sup>15</sup>

Our author goes on to say in the first essay: "The Bulkley is apparently a very deep torrent which, in that part of its course, flows about due north in a straight line and is at least 125 yards wide, while the rivulet it receives and is represented as the main stream by Poudrier is, by actual measurement, not more than thirty-five at its mouth and scarcely fifteen half a mile above, forming to right angles with the Bulkley. Its sluggish and dark waters hardly make an impression on the turgid and soapy waves of the latter. Yet it is this insignificant stream, ten times narrower than the other, which was, and has to this day continued to be, represented as the Bulkley on all the official maps, while the same documents give out the latter as the Morice! As well would it be to call Blackwater the part of the Fraser above the confluence of the former, or take the St. Charles of

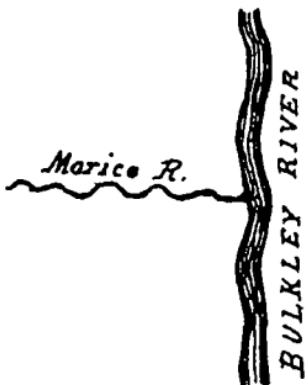
<sup>13</sup> A Dominion Land Surveyor, long deceased, whose map, made mostly from hearsay, teems with errors.

<sup>14</sup> *Ap. Transactions of the Royal Canadian Institute, Toronto, 1918*, p. 26.

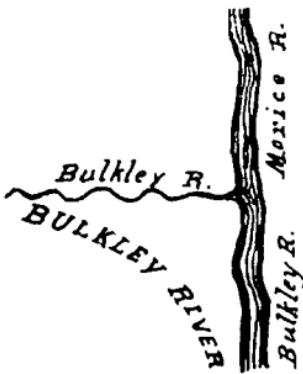
<sup>15</sup> *Exploration de la Rivière Bulkley, ap. Bulletin de la Soc. neuchâteloise de Géogr.*, vol. XXI, p. 101; Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

Quebec for the headwaters of the mighty Saint Lawrence."<sup>16</sup>

The accompanying graphic representation will do for the eyes what the foregoing lines have endeavoured to do for the mind.



According to Morice.



According to the Government.

Morice has time and again protested against such an anomaly: we hereby re-echo his contention.

Another point which we might submit to the proper authorities is this: On September 19, 1895, as we have seen, the same explorer discovered, at his own cost and peril, and then mapped out an important sheet of water, the depth of which he had ascertained in several places. This he himself called at first St. Thomas Lake, after one of his companions who, when its real size was realized, insisted on its being named Morice, a denomination which has since stuck to it among the whites who do not use maps, when they are in contact with the Indians. On the Government maps issued since that discovery, the same is labelled Eutseuk, a word which is neither native, nor English, nor French, nay, which, as spelt by the modern cartographer, one does not know how to pronounce. Is it not

<sup>16</sup> *The Northern Interior, etc.*, p. 27.

customary for explorers who discover a geographical point, let alone survey and map it, to give it the name they please? Father Morice not only discovered that beautiful lake in 1895, but published its outlines two years later and revisited it, in 1899, long before any white man, surveyor or not, had ever seen it.<sup>17</sup>

The native name of Cambie Lake is *Yootsoo* (not *Ootsa*), and Morice Lake is to the Indians *Eté'auh Yootsoo*, which is tantamount to admitting that, being so little known even of the aborigines, that lake has no name of its own, since *Eté'auh Yootsoo* means "the farthest Yootsoo."

To make confusion worse confounded, though with the best of intentions, another party, seeing that the proper authorities were averse to correcting Poudrier's blunder (which they nevertheless admit, as they did to Father Morice in Victoria) concerning the so-called Morice River, thought fit to give our friend's name to the sheet of water called Loring by its discoverer. There are now two mistakes instead of one! Has the right of priority been entirely done away with? If not, in the name of what authority can any one change the name of an important geographical point which has been known and used for over thirty years?

Father Morice feels strongly on those points, because he knows that a time will come when sane people, tiring of the ridiculousness of calling by the name of the main stream a tributary which is totally different from the same, will restore the name Bulkley to the river which heads in Loring Lake, when Morice Lake will, of course, be a misnomer as regards the latter.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> And Mr. Swannell is the only one, to our knowledge, who has ever seen it since.

<sup>18</sup> Of course, the idea is to make the Morice River flow out of Morice Lake. But then why change its name to Bulkley after it has received a tributary which no sane person could take for the same stream?



**WRITER**



## CHAPTER IX

### WRITER

[1888-1930]

APART from the four geographical pamphlets we have already mentioned in Note 7 of our Chapter VII, Father Morice published lately in the *Bulletin of la Société neuchateloise de Géographie* a fifth, of ninety-four pages, under the title *L'Ouest Canadien: Esquisse géographique, ethnographique, historique et démographique*. He had previously had in the same periodical, as well as in a Canadian review,<sup>1</sup> a geographico-historical essay on *L'Abbé Petitot et les Découvertes géographiques au Canada*, wherein he corrects many errors of that author, who was certainly no historian. Most of his productions, however—and he has been a prolific writer—bore on two other subjects, each of which is of the greatest importance, we mean anthropology and history. The following appreciations, which close by way of recapitulation an article on "Morice, Rev. Adrian Gabriel, Historian," in Morgan's *Canadian Men and Women of the Time*,<sup>2</sup> quite appropriately represent the chief objects of our hero's mental activities.

"An eminent philologist and scholar, the results of whose researches give him an honoured place in every land" (the late Geo. Murray). "Has done signal service in the cause of his Church, and made some highly valuable contributions to Canadian historical literature" (D. G. French).

In fact, Morice is much more known as a historian

<sup>1</sup> *Le Canada Français*, of Quebec.

<sup>2</sup> Toronto, 1912.

to the general reader, and, were it not that we are averse to rendering too voluminous a book to which we have fixed beforehand certain limits, we feel that we should consecrate distinct chapters to what he has done on behalf of each of these two sciences.

Chronologically speaking, he dabbled in anthropology before he tackled history. Anthropology, it is well known, is the generic name for the systematic study of man under all his various aspects. It comprises, therefore: ethnology, or man considered as forming different nations or tribes; philology, or the study of the languages proper to the same; sociology, that is, the science of man's manners and customs; mythology, that of his fabulous beliefs; archæology, that of his works at remote periods, etc.

Father Morice has, for forty years and more, studied from all those distinct angles an important family of aboriginal Americans, and published about it and a few unrelated tribes books and papers which have won him an enviable place among the anthropologists of the two worlds.

He "is well known in anthropological circles for his studies on the Déné tribes, which have appeared from time to time in the proceedings of scientific societies and in book form," wrote the late E. C. S. Scholefield, the former head of the Provincial Library of British Columbia, and himself an author, while another librarian, this time of the east,<sup>3</sup> wrote, himself: "The contribution which Father Morice has made to the study of the folk-lore and philology of the western division of the Déné people has been recognized both in Great Britain and France as of the highest value."

Other persons, newspapers and books alike, have testified to the same scientific achievements. We

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<sup>3</sup> Namely James Bain, of the Public Library, Toronto.

quote but one of the former, the Toronto *Globe*: "Father Morice, who is an accomplished linguist and an accurate observer, has thrown a flood of light on the aborigines of 'New Caledonia,'"<sup>4</sup> it said on the occasion of the publication of his first English book.<sup>5</sup>

A write-up on a book of one of his friends, therefore not anything intended to boom any of his own publications, calls our author a man "who knows the Indians of the interior of British Columbia as no other white man knows them," a statement which frees us from the onus of further expatiating on this subject. Not only does he know them himself, he has made them known to others. He imparted his knowledge through no fewer than four regular books and thirty-two monographs or papers, without counting a number of fugitive and encyclopædia articles.

His very first production in this line, *The Western Dénés: Their Manners and Customs*, was written as early as 1888 for the Canadian Institute of Toronto, with which he has ever since remained in touch. Composed in English by a Frenchman, it had the honours of a French translation at the hands of another Frenchman. To this day, despite a few material blemishes such as useless exclamation marks due to a Scotchman to whom the manuscript had been submitted at a time when the author was not so sure of his English,<sup>6</sup> it remains one of the most instructive papers on an Indian tribe ever written. At least, so it was at the time.

Much superior, however, are his *Notes, Archæological, Industrial and Sociological, on the Western Dénés*, published (1894) by the same scientific society. This is a veritable storehouse of first-hand and quite

<sup>4</sup> As the greater part of British Columbia was originally known

<sup>5</sup> July 16, 1904.

<sup>6</sup> That was Father Morice's first and last experiment of the kind.

original information on the points represented by its title. The author of the *History of the Early Missions in Western Canada*,<sup>7</sup> the Very Rev. Dean Harris, of St. Catharines, affirmed that never before had there been published such a valuable, complete and accurate account of any family of Canadian aborigines.

A little detail which may be worth recording: True to his versatile instinct, Father Morice gave in that book—for it counts 222 large pages—evidence of an accomplishment for which we have not yet given him credit. He claims that he never had a lesson in drawing; yet, of the 199 figures that adorn the volume, over 195 are due to his pen. To some, such studies might not seem very interesting. But we may as well remark here that Morice has a way of his own to prevent dullness. After having drawn the reader through perhaps a little deep scientific questions, he promptly relieves the dryness of such disquisitions by descriptions or digressions that soon rest him. For instance, speaking in his *Great Déné Race* of the Déné of northern Canada, he begins by “locating” him, fixing him for the mind through an original image of his climate.

Severe, indeed, are the seasons during which nature seems for seven, eight or nine months dead or slumbering under her mantle of dazzling white. But then cold and frost are not without their advantages. They transform our great lakes into boundless plains, over which the native huntsman, tired of the hardships of forest travelling, hurries while sending forth the plaintive notes of his weird music, or his canine team gambols after the painful ascents and numberless difficulties attending land driving. They bridge over the rivers, preserve eatables from corruption and solidify liquids, so that they can be carried about with the greatest ease.

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<sup>7</sup> One would now say “eastern.”

And then cannot the reader appreciate the beauty of those vast solitudes where man can so readily commune with his Creator? Those silent forests dressed in an immaculate garment over which the bright, if not very warm, rays of a March sun sprinkle myriads of the purest diamonds? Would he not feel the charms of those brief days when brilliant Sol receives a suite of two, four, or even eight satellites through the mysterious operations of the parhelia, or of those unending nights when nature seems at play, either encircling her silvery orb with a glorious halo, or displaying in the quiet heavens the wonders of the aurora borealis: now gigantic serpents that silently glide about through the sidereal spaces; and then simply luminous rays that proceed from an unseen focus, to paint and stripe the huge dial over which revolves the tireless Great Bear, which plays for the child of the North the rôle of a never failing timepiece.

All these wonders, and many more, are the exclusive appanage of our high latitudes. They contribute towards making life bearable, nay agreeable, even to the exile from the land of smiling fields and sun-kissed meadows.<sup>8</sup>

It would be tedious to enumerate our scientist's anthropological writings, which appeared in the most highly reputed of the American and other reviews, such as the *American Anthropologist*, the *Transactions* of the Canadian Institute, the *American Antiquarian*, the *Année linguistique* of Paris, and the various *Comptes Rendus* of the sessions of the International Congress of Americanists, to which he assisted by special invitation, and several times free of any travelling expense. Nevertheless, we can scarcely help making an exception on behalf of a 1928 volume, *Disparus et Survivants*, that is, aboriginal races which have disappeared and a few of those which survive. This is the most voluminous, though not the most important of our author's anthropological productions,

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<sup>8</sup> *Ubi supra*, pp. 19-20.

a work which the editor of the review<sup>9</sup> in which it at first appeared serially, never tired of calling a masterpiece. Here are a few lines of his official appreciation, as issued in his periodical. We necessarily abridge.

Since its foundation, in 1877, the Quebec Geographical Society had not the honour of publishing a work of such importance and signed by such an historian and a philologist so justly renowned in Europe and America. A scientist of great erudition, as well as a remarkable writer and an indefatigable evangelical missionary, Rev. A. G. Morice, O.M.I. is, since a number of years, acknowledged as an authority on the Indian races of Northern America . . .

Relying on his experience of almost half a century of apostleship among the Northern Dénés,<sup>10</sup> and unfolding in those studies a prodigious erudition, Father Morice reproduces to our eyes in a magnificent style the *Odyssey* of the native races since the remotest ages of history to our own days . . .

In pages in which picturesqueness vies with historical accuracy, he depicts to us some remarkable types of warriors whose nobility of heart would put to shame many a Pale Face. To read this book is to epitomize in a striking manner all the progress that American erudition has realized in the course of the last years.<sup>11</sup>

The editor-reviewer then goes on to tell of the opinion of that great French savant, Mr. Henri Froidevaux, who recognized while they were still in course of publication the "very great scientific value and interest" of our friend's anthropological essays, which he was the first to strongly recommend for republication in volume form.

Father Morice's way of letting others share in his copious store of anthropological lore, acquired through

<sup>9</sup> *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Québec.*

<sup>10</sup> An exaggeration, remarks Father Morice, as he was only 28 years in B.C.

<sup>11</sup> *Ubi suprad*, pp. 311-12; Quebec, 1928.

long years of contact with the Indians, was not limited to publications of his own. His attendance at scientific congresses and analogous gatherings, in spite of his retiring disposition, served also a similar purpose. There is a great international body, the Congress of Americanists, which, every second year, brings together, in some city of Europe or America alternately, the most brilliant amongst those savants who specialize in the study of the American aborigines. Our scientist assisted at several of its sessions, in every case his travelling expenses being at least partially defrayed by the Americanists, or by some outside party.

At Quebec, in 1906, not only did he read a paper and several times addressed the Americanists there assembled, but he created quite a stir by taking to task a New York lady, who had just spoken disparagingly of the action of the Christian Churches on the natives. As testifies the official Report of the Congress, she had complained that "missionaries had deprived them of their æsthetic and moral notions, to replace these by ideas to which they could not get accustomed, and left them at the mercy of their passions, while they took away from them all their artistic faculties."<sup>12</sup> Hence their lamentable decline.

Hearing which, our missionary fretted at the injustice of such a contention, and wanted immediately to take up the gauntlet, when two members of some renown in the scientific world joined in the praise of the lady's essay, which, otherwise, was not without merit. As soon as they were through with their encomiums, Father Morice stood up and, in accents he did not succeed in keeping cool, he claimed that the

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<sup>12</sup> *Congrès International des Américanistes. XVe Session*, vol. I, p. XLV.  
F.M.—18

lady sociologist had put on the shoulders of the missionaries responsibilities which did not rightfully belong to them.

"People," he cried out, "seem too apt to forget the unprincipled whiskey peddler and the unscrupulous white man who furtively introduces himself into the lone Indian *tipi*, to dishonour woman and ruin the family. These are the causes of aboriginal decay, to that is native decline due. You intend to invite the Indians of the West to the festivities which are to mark the tercentenary of Quebec City. Do you not know that, were it not for the action of the Catholic missionary, instead of whole tribes which can still take part in such celebrations, you would have nothing left but the memory of an extinct race to evoke?"<sup>13</sup>

These words, uttered in the tones of subdued indignation, were received with deafening applause, especially by the good people of old Quebec, of which there was a numerous and select representation, and it was the origin for the orator of fervent and lasting friendships. Immediately, an Hon. Darnell Davis, C.M.G., got up to declare:

Dr. Haddon has said that the Rajah of Sarrawak had put down head hunting. Well, the French missionaries have converted the North American Indians from being cannibals into becoming non-cannibals. Finding myself in the country of Jogues and Brébeuf and other heroic missionaries, I desire to testify to the services rendered by the missionaries in civilizing the Indians.<sup>14</sup>

Then Dr. A. F. Chamberlain remarked:

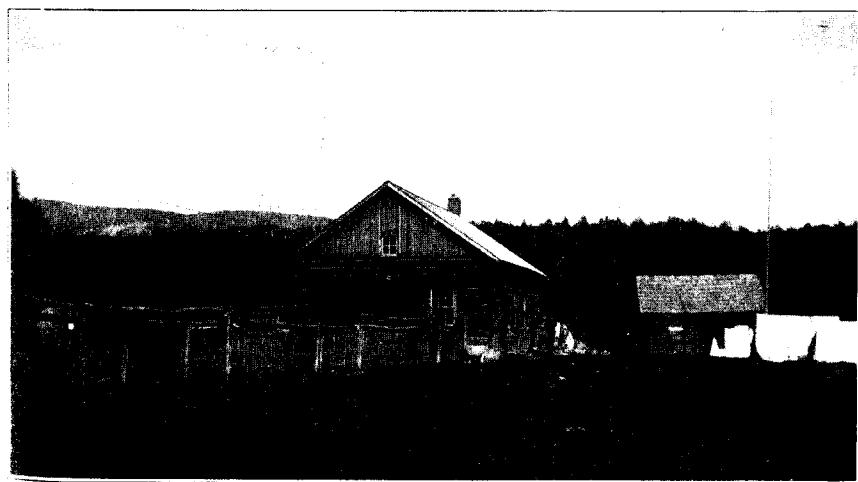
This missionary question, it seems to me, settles itself. There are missionaries and missionaries. Those who have honoured this Congress with their attendance are surely not of the sort complained of. Not only have they blessed the

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XLVI.



*Photo by F. C. Swannell, L.S.*  
CARRIER INDIANS OF ST. MARY'S LAKE



FORT McLEOD, 1888



Indians by their labours, but they have also contributed largely to the fund of scientific knowledge.

We have with us in particular Father Morice, and I may be permitted, perhaps, to congratulate him upon his participation in the labours of the XVth Congress of Americanists, and to assure him of the respect and admiration of which his life of devotion as a missionary and his valuable anthropological studies of the Dénés have gained for him both in the realm of science and in the world at large. His many friends and correspondents are only too glad to know him *de visu* as well as through his writings.<sup>15</sup>

Dr. R. Bell, one of the two original admirers of the lady essayist, declared in his turn that his own comments were aimed at a quite different category of people from the Catholic missionaries.

Two years later, Father Morice was in Vienna, Austria, attending the sessions of the same Congress; then, in the very last days of 1915, at Washington, D.C., where he acted as honorary secretary to the same, and representative of the University of Saskatchewan, and, still later (1924), at The Hague, Netherlands, on each of which occasions he read papers which were duly published in the Congress Proceedings.

Likewise, some years before, in the summer of 1909, that great institution, the British Association for the Advancement of Science, having met in Winnipeg, sent him a deputation to invite him to its sessions, as soon as it came to know that he was domiciled in that city, and its "anthropological section was delighted with his description of the language, habits and customs of these particular people"—the Indians who had formed his flock.<sup>16</sup>

But the circle of scientists, international as it may

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Catholic Register*, Toronto, Sept. 30, 1909.

be, is somewhat narrow. We think it can be affirmed without fear of contradiction that it is chiefly as a historian that Morice is known in the world of letters. In the field of Western Canadian history, he has indeed rendered yeoman service, and, what is better still, he has done it well and in a most effective way. The country owes him a debt of gratitude for quite a series of works whose value cannot but get better appreciated as years roll by.

Our author is somewhat of a stylist, either in English or in French, and, as we have already seen, his manner of writing usually generates an interest which does not lag. Most of his anthropological efforts are in the former language, but his historical works are either in both or in French alone.

Concerning his use of English, we base our appreciation on many expressions of public opinion, of which here are a few:

"We admit our wonder that a Frenchman could write so attractively in English."<sup>17</sup> "Its English is scholarly, idiomatic and correct, displaying a use of the language that even old countrymen might well imitate."<sup>18</sup> "We must not forget that the author has a wonderful command of English."<sup>19</sup> "Our purpose in giving such copious extracts," wrote the late L. Drummond, S.J., a specialist on style, "has been to show by direct quotation how well Father Morice has mastered the English language."<sup>20</sup> Speaking of the same English work by our author, the *Kootenay Mail* affirms that "it is remarkably well written,"<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Ashcroft Journal*, 25 June, 1904.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard McEvoy, author of books, poet and journalist, in the *Vancouver Province*, July 16, 1904.

<sup>19</sup> *Victoria Colonist*, 6 July, 1904.

<sup>20</sup> *The Northwest Review*, Winnipeg, Oct. 22, 1904.

<sup>21</sup> *Revelstoke*, Nov. 4, 1905.

while the *Montreal Star* says that, "A master of many languages, Father Morice is particularly facile in English."<sup>22</sup> Nay, even in old, conservative and rather supercilious London, England, a public man declared that the first of his popular English works was "thoroughly well written."<sup>23</sup> An able American periodical, appealing to a particularly cultivated class of readers, the *Philadelphia Ecclesiastical Review*, affirmed of him that "he is the master of a style that brings the distant and the past into the actual, living present."<sup>24</sup>

We now come to the most successful of Father Morice's books, which had three Canadian and one English editions, the *History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia*.<sup>25</sup> Strange as it may seem at first glance, this was a child of his anthropological studies. He had been describing his Indians from every standpoint, when the thought dawned upon him that the accounts of their old men might furnish him material for an historical essay on the same. Carefully collecting and checking them one by another, he perceived that, apart from a few trivial details, they were reliable as genuine history. The paper had probably been prepared for the press when Mr. Alexander C. Murray, the son of Chief Factor A. H. Murray, of Yukon fame, then in charge of Fort St. James, formerly the capital of New Caledonia, told him that the attic of his establishment contained a pile of old letters and other documents which might be of use to him.

Morice found there a vast amount of precious

<sup>22</sup> Dec. 2, 1905.

<sup>23</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, Feb. 20, 1906.

<sup>24</sup> Dec. number, 1910. These quotations, which could easily be multiplied, are brought here in answer to the possible followers of one of those small minds, a French Canadian, who did not scruple to try and depreciate our friend's work on the score of its language.

<sup>25</sup> And is now out of print, save for a very few copies in the hands of the author.

material, the worth of which had apparently never been suspected. Some of the papers were torn, while others still bore the marks of dirty hobnails which had pressed upon them while being trampled under foot. The result of the find, for which Mr. Murray cannot be too much thanked, was the above-mentioned volume, which from the start was a success, since its manuscript was accepted for publication without being examined. The William Briggs House in Toronto had then a friend in Vancouver, Mr. Bernard McEvoy,<sup>26</sup> who sent them such a good account of the work that it was printed right away, and was immediately greeted with a concert of applause from the press of every English-speaking land.

The work of a Catholic priest, the *Methodist Magazine and Review* honoured itself as much as it did the author by publishing a ten-page illustrated account of it, in the course of which it asserted that Father Morice had "rendered an important service to his country by his historical investigations and lucid and luminous record of those heroic days."<sup>27</sup> According to the *Toronto News*, it was a "remarkable achievement and a valuable contribution to Canadian history."<sup>28</sup> "Seldom has it been our lot to review a work so carefully written and so satisfactory in every respect," affirmed the *Vancouver Province* of the same date, while the *Toronto Globe* was struck especially by the impartiality of the book. "The strongest impression produced by a perusal of this work," it said, "is that of the fairness of the author in his treatment of themes usually approached with bias and handled

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<sup>26</sup> Author of *From the Great Lakes to the Wide West*; London, 1902.

<sup>27</sup> August, 1904.

<sup>28</sup> July 16, 1904.

with partizanship."<sup>29</sup> To the Vancouver *News-Advertiser*, the book was "not only of great value, but interesting to the point of fascination, a textbook, a book of reference."<sup>30</sup>

That book immediately placed him in the front rank of Western historians, and a letter which reached him as we were correcting the proofs of the present pages is our excuse for stating that he has kept that place to this day. On August 22, 1930, a great scholar and historical student of Portland, Oregon, wrote him:

"Mr. Watson, of *The Beaver*, has kindly given me your address, since I have so often heard about you, but never knew where to find you. You appear to be the supreme authority for British Columbia interior history. I am intensely interested in the early history of that region, and have long been desirous to locate you in order to verify some of my data."

His correspondent then goes on to inquire about the date of the first crossing of the Rocky Mountains by a trader named McDougall, a date which some historians deem all the more important as they base on it the British rights to the territory of the present Pacific province. At the same time, that question betrays the fact that, contrary to most historians, the Portland writer does not possess Father Morice's work; else he would have easily found therein the information he wanted.

Before going further, we may, in justification of this last remark, add that to our knowledge at least fifteen books on British Columbia, written since that time, either quote from its pages or refer to it as an authority.

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<sup>29</sup> July 16, 1904.

<sup>30</sup> Aug. 21, 1904.

Only a few have utilized its data without mentioning their source, a proceeding which is hardly honest.<sup>31</sup>

A passage which has been reproduced more than once, or been alluded to still more often, is that which refers to the first contact of the whites with the Carrier Indians of Stuart Lake. We feel that we would not be doing justice to our author if we did not find room for it here.

The 26th of July, 1806, was a rather windy day on what the Indians then called Lake Na'kal, the surface of which was being ploughed into deep furrows. The soap-berries were ripening, and most of 'Kwah's people were camped at the mouth of Beaver Creek, to the south-west of the present Fort St. James, when what appeared to them two immense canoes were descried struggling against the wind, around a point which separated them from the outlet of the lake.

Immediately great alarm arises in the crowd of natives. As such large canoes have never plied on Carrier waters, there is hardly a doubt that they must contain Tœyen's friends,<sup>32</sup> the wonderful strangers from the "country beyond

<sup>31</sup> Another, Arthur Anstey, ungenerously puts to the credit of Simon Fraser what rightly belongs to Father Morice. According to that new author, who does not give the name of one of his sources, that explorer "tells amusing stories of their reception of his gifts of tobacco and soap" (*The Romance of British Columbia*, p. 71; Toronto, 1921). Simon Fraser never published a word anent his discovery of Lake Stuart, nor is it known that he ever wrote anything about the way he was received by its Indians. It is Father Morice who tells the original story of it, such as he had it from the son of one who was living at the time the explorer landed there.

A third, D. J. Dickie, in her interesting and beautifully gotten up *The Canadian West*, gives, among other details due to Morice's book, an abridged account of that first encounter of whites and reds (pp. 65-66), as well as the sometimes much distorted Douglas episode (when that worthy was in danger of his life at Fort St. James) which, contrary to Gosnell in his *Sir James Douglas* (p. 108; Toronto, 1908), she has the good sense to relate (pp. 134-35) after our author, who had undisputable and first-hand authority for his version of the affair. It was quite right on the part of Dickie; it would have been still better if she had at least hinted at her source of information in her "Acknowledgements," where she gives their due to others.

<sup>32</sup> Tœyen was one of their number who had previously seen the whites at another place, and had received therefrom a piece of cloth as a prepayment for his good offices with his compatriots

the horizon" he had been told to expect back. Meanwhile, the strange crafts are heading for Beaver Creek, and lo! a song the like of which has never been heard in this part of the world strikes the native ear. What can that mean? Might not this be a war party, after all?

"No," declares Toeyen who, donning his red piece of cloth as an apron, seizes a tiny spruce bark canoe lying on the beach and fearlessly paddles away. On, on he goes, tossed about by the great waves, until he meets the strangers, who, recognizing him by his badge, bid him come on board. His fellow tribesmen, now seeing in the distance his own little canoe floating tenantless, take fright.

"They have already killed him," they exclaim. "Ready, ye warriors; away with the women!"

At this cry, which flies from mouth to mouth, the men seize their bows and arrows and the women and children seek shelter in the woods. But the curious crafts, which, on coming nearer, prove to be large birch-bark canoes, are now within hearing distance, and Toeyen cries out to the men on shore to be of good cheer and have no fear, as the strangers are animated by the most friendly dispositions.

The fugitives are hastily recalled, and Simon Fraser, with John Stuart and his other companions, put ashore in the presence of a crowd of wondering Carriers.

Lake Stuart was discovered, and a new province was added to the geographical conquests of the North-West Company. To accomplish this, it had taken Fraser's party only seven days less than Mackenzie had required to reach the seacoast from his winter quarters.<sup>33</sup>

On landing, Fraser's men, to impress the natives with a proper idea of their wonderful resources, fired a volley with their guns, whereupon the whole crowd of Carriers fell prostrate to the ground. To allay their fears and make friends, tobacco was offered them, which, on being tasted, was found too bitter and thrown away. Then, to show its use, the crew lighted their pipes, and, at the sight of the smoke issuing from their mouths, the people began to whisper that they must come from the land of the ghosts,

<sup>33</sup> "It should be borne in mind that, besides starting from the east instead of the west, side of the Rockies, Fraser had to ascend two important rivers which Mackenzie did not even see."

since they were still full of the fire wherewith they had been cremated. Pieces of soap were given to the women, who, taking them to be cakes of fat, set upon crunching them, thereby causing foam and bubbles in the mouth, which puzzled both actors and bystanders.<sup>34</sup>

We could add to the above appreciations of the book, from which we have just quoted, even more flattering encomiums. For instance, the Winnipeg *Northwest Review* editor declared that he had seen nothing published on Western Canada that compared with it for "original research, judicial impartiality, keen insight and accurate scholarship,"<sup>35</sup> while the British Columbia writer, R. E. Gosnell, admitted that "not for many years has such an important work relating to our province appeared."<sup>36</sup> "There is not a dull chapter in the 350 pages of this book," claimed the *British Columbian*, of New Westminster.<sup>37</sup>

We fear we must put an end to those quotations; else the same compliment could never be paid this little book of ours. We shall merely add that Father Morice's work contained the first authentic portrait of Simon Fraser ever published. We might perhaps also mention the fact that most of the illustrations in that book are after photographs of Father Morice's own making, still another accomplishment to his credit!

That author had opened (1897) his book-writing career by a popular volume, *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*, frequently quoted or referred to in the foregoing pages, which had no special points of excellence, though the reviewer of the Neufchâtel Geographical Society bulletin professed to find it of "real profit to the

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>35</sup> *Ap. The Canadian Bookseller*; Toronto, Dec., 1904.

<sup>36</sup> Editorial of the *Vancouver World*, 7 July, 1904.

<sup>37</sup> July 13, 1904.

geographer and the ethnologist."<sup>38</sup> Then came from his busy pen a French historical dictionary of French Canadian and Métis worthies of the Canadian West. This cannot be said to be without a single error, as, with regard to some who lived on the plains, he had to be guided chiefly by an author "on the spot" whom he thought to be reliable, but was not always. Such as it was, being the first work of its kind, it was given a good reception by the press.

This cannot compare, however, with that which greeted the most important of our friend's books, the *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*, the first edition of which appeared in two English volumes, richly illustrated. It was translated with amplifications, printed in three big volumes, and, finally, with many more additions and a text extending to 1915, was printed in four, containing double the matter of the preceding three.

It is on this work, now almost a classic, that Morice's reputation as a historian chiefly rests east of the Rocky Mountains, though it also embodies a full account of his Church's history and activities to the west thereof.

In this connection, we may be allowed to reproduce from one of his later books, *De Lebret à la Haye, Lisieux, Lourdes et Verdun*, a little episode which shows how far the fame of his Church history has travelled.

He had boarded at Paris a train whose ultimate destination was Bordeaux, and was attempting to show to a French priest how very superior were the Canadian railways and railway system. His new friend but partly agreed with him, and was making objections which betrayed personal acquaintance with both. He ended by admitting that he had travelled

<sup>38</sup> *Bulletin*, vol. IX, p. 201.

in Canada as far west as Winnipeg; after which he launched into quite a dissertation on that country and its history.

Father Morice was quite surprised to find him so well informed on the latter, and could not help telling him so.

"Well, you see," remarked the strange priest, "the people of the West have a Father Morice, who has written I do not know how many books. With them you can learn something. Do you know those books?"

"Which books?" asked his interlocutor.

"I cannot give you their titles. In one of them he speaks of Vancouver and gives out the history of the West."

"You mean his *History of the Catholic Church?*"

"Yes, of the Catholic Church in Western Canada."

"That's not much, hey?"

"I should not say so. I found it very interesting."

"Did you?"

"Yes, he gives in it plenty of interesting stories, lots of details on the missions and speaks even of a man I have known."

"Indeed?"

"Sure. I wonder if that Father Morice is still in the West?"

"Not at the present time."

"Do you know where he is?"

"By your side."<sup>39</sup>

His *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada* made as much of a stir in literary circles as had done his book on the Northern Interior of British Columbia, but not for the same reason. In 1870 white opponents of the Riel régime had been worsted in their efforts to put it down—until troops from the

<sup>39</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 193-94; St. Boniface, 1925.

East had arrived at Fort Garry.<sup>40</sup> All the English authors, therefore, except Alexander Begg, who knew about the question more than all the others combined, had given, for the incontestable truth, the most outrageous fables against the Métis. To refute these not disinterested inventions, Father Morice insisted on having in English the first edition of the History which his superiors had asked him to write.<sup>41</sup> The skill and evident straightforwardness with which he presented his proofs, which he shrewdly chose, not from previous Catholic works, but from the contemporary official blue books and Protestant testimony, had the desired effect. Racial and religious fanatics had either to keep silent or to change their tactics. The Winnipeg *Telegram*, among others, was honest enough to write immediately after perusing the two volumes:

One of the most interesting portions of the book is Father Morice's account of the troublesome days at the time when Manitoba was taken into the Confederation. He approaches the subject from a different standpoint to that of the generally accepted histories. Time is softening the bitter feelings and the racial and religious prejudices which that outbreak occasioned . . .

Father Morice takes serious objection to the term rebellion as applied to the Riel uprising. Insurrection is the word he uses, and the writer must admit his arguments in favour of this contention, which are strong ones.

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<sup>40</sup> In order to protect the whites who were soon to come against the Indians, and help the establishment of the permanent Government of which that of Riel was never intended to be anything else than the forerunner (Cf. *Instructions to the Honourable A. Archibald*, p. 6; Ottawa, 1871).

<sup>41</sup> Or rather they were more modest in their demands. Rev. Father Prisque Magnan, O.M.I., then provincial superior, asked him to write, in French, an account of the Oblate missions in North-West Canada; but he showed himself quite satisfied when he saw his confrère enlarging on his own plan, in the same way as he agreed on the wisdom of having its first edition in English.

The reviewer ends thus: "The two volumes will be read with the deepest interest by every old-timer and by every student of Western Canada. Father Morice has taken such great care in the compilation of his facts and has delved so deeply into original documents of every character, that his book is bound to be an authority for future reference on the history of the Roman Catholic Church and the early days of the West."<sup>42</sup>

We could accumulate here quite an array of most laudatory appreciations of this great work, which in English was nevertheless little more than the nucleus of what it has become under its final French dress (four volumes). We prefer to content ourselves with a few lines from an independent quarter which may be said to represent all parties, especially non-Catholic ones, or no party. Here is the opinion of the *Canadian Bookseller*, which is headed: "Father Morice's Important History":

Canada has been blessed with a plentiful supply of historians, but of the number very few seem to have written works of abiding interest. This may be due largely to the fact that there has been a great deal of duplication and a great deal of imperfect and hurried writing. Parkman has caught the spirit of the early days admirably, and his historical works will go down to posterity as the best picture of pioneer life in the east. For Western Canada, Father Morice can lay claim to having produced history of a similarly entertaining character. In his latest two-volume *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*, which might better have been called a history of Western Canada, he has produced a work of considerable importance. He has seized on all the romantic elements of this history and has made the most of them. This, too, may be said of Father Morice's work that its accuracy is, humanly speaking, undoubted. He is a most painstaking investigator and conscientious writer, and in reading this book,

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<sup>42</sup> March 19, 1910.

one feels that the author may be relied upon to give the correct version of each incident.<sup>43</sup>

After this, it would be superfluous to say with what enthusiasm that great work was received by the Catholic press itself. We will therefore quote here from but one publication, because of the renewed comparison with Parkman it contains. Coming after the lapse of many years and from a party with absolutely no connection with the first, this is bound to strike one as the expression of truth. The reviewer of the greatest strictly ecclesiastical periodical in America speaks of one of the four volumes of the French edition when he says:

This third volume is, like its predecessors, a monument to the author's laborious research among the original sources of Canadian history. But the immense wealth of erudition is carried with an ease that never betrays weariness. Though a scholarly work of history, it is no less a piece of graceful literature. *Père Morice is a Canadian Parkman.*<sup>44</sup>

Another piece of historical writing to the credit of Father Morice is his *Histoire abrégée de l'Ouest Canadien*.<sup>45</sup> This is a manual, or hand-book, embodying in a concise form the secular—not merely the religious—history of the West, which was printed in France just on the eve of the Great War. It was published only at its close, all the copies having remained in the hands of the enemy at Lille and the plates of its illustrations being confiscated by the same. It is a little work remarkable for its well-balanced conciseness and the generous share of attention it bestows on non-Catholic data.

This was for the schools. For the general public

<sup>43</sup> March, 1910.

<sup>44</sup> *The Ecclesiastical Review*, vol. LXX, p. 440.

<sup>45</sup> St. Boniface, 1914.

he wrote, soon after, a *Life of Mgr. Langevin, Archbishop of St. Boniface*, the first edition of which was sold before it was out, a success unheard of in Canadian literary circles. Bishop after bishop praised it without stint, and Archbishop Ireland, of St. Paul, Minn., declared it to be "a full and complete photograph of the prelate."

This did not prevent two bold young priests, who were in reality but the loud-speakers of as many higher personages, from attacking it. One of these did not want the life of that Bishop to be written and had formally informed its author of it, while the other wanted it written by somebody else. They were not able to contest its accuracy or even deny its great interest, thereby they drew upon their heads a flaying which they must surely not have forgotten.

Father Morice was never in better form than when he thus executed the two audacious clerics. His language, clear and limpid as crystal water, and as graceful as it was at times satiric, was simply delightful, while the cogency of his reasoning as well as the pungency of his quiet sarcasm could not be surpassed.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> This twenty-four-page pamphlet, entitled *Zoilus redivivus, ou un Critique critique*, has a little history of its own, a peep into which will prepare for the much more serious doings of the same yellow Auvergnat we will have to mention at the end of Chapter XI. Pressed by respectable parties to defend a work which had previously been superlatively praised by the whole French Canadian press and even by no fewer than eleven Bishops, its author, who was perfectly well aware of the identity of the prime movers in the attack on it, yielded all the more readily to the advice of the former as, in his intentions, the *Life of Mgr. Langevin* was destined to continue on the public the action of that great patriot. He therefore wrote a long letter to a newspaper, with the understanding that it should be put in pamphlet form and 500 copies of the same given him for distribution among those who were presumed to have read the attack.

In the meantime, the writer of the same had been the victim of an accident, in the course of a trip undertaken in the interests of colonization (another of his hobbies): hurled from his seat in a gasoline launch on Lake Winnipegois by a squall which nearly caused the craft to capsize, he had had his right shoulder dislocated, and was strictly confined to his

One of the forms of mental activity he delights in is controversy. The following account of a little controversial publication of the former will tell whether or not he succeeds in that kind of literature:

A little book which should be in the hands of every one interested in the question of the Manitoban Schools is the one which has for title *The Manitoba School Question: being a Controversy between the Rev. E. J. B. Salter and the Rev. A. G. Morice, O.M.I., M.A., as published in Letters to the Winnipeg Free Press*. Father Morice's well-known erudition finds things easy with the extraordinary ignorance displayed by the poor preacher. By means of a pressing and learned argument, the author of the *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada* reduces to naught every one of the objections put forth by his adversary, who (be it said within parentheses), superabundantly shows from the start that he little expected the knock-down blow which the learned Oblate administers to him with a smile.<sup>44</sup>

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room perfectly helpless after an operation. So that, being astonished at not receiving the promised pamphlets, he soon ascertained that the whole lot of them had been intercepted and probably destroyed. Nothing daunted by that "mishap," to be mild, he had another edition of the same formally approved by his Provincial, struck off the press at the expense of the latter.

This was sent by special messenger; but the same party who had interfered with the first edition did away with the second, and proofs, moreover, soon appeared that the guilty party was none other than a young individual tormented by the demon of envy (and acting probably in collusion with the author of the criticism), who must remain known under the enigmatic, but none the less exact, designation of "the Auvergnat."

Father Morice, remembering that leaving the last word to jealousy and dishonesty would be tantamount to consenting to the practical destruction of the good which was to be done by his book, caused a third edition of his defense to be printed in Quebec (by very religious hands, too) and mailed directly therefrom, so that no meddling from jealous and interested personalities would be possible. The consternation is still recalled of the guilty parties (critic and thief) when, one fine morning, they both received a nicely printed copy of the dreaded brochure, which seems to have knocked at many doors not only in St. Boniface, but throughout Canada! The author of the unjust criticism, in a high place, had just declared to a tease who was playfully threatening him with it: "Impossible! We have taken all the necessary precautions to prevent its re-issue"!

<sup>44</sup>"Le Pas Herald, 17 July, 1913.



**HE AND OTHERS**



## CHAPTER X

### HE AND OTHERS

*(Personal and Reminiscent)*

**A**FTER having hurriedly studied his work, we may now be allowed to have a peep into the make-up and ways of the workman.

Physically, Father Morice scarcely needs to be described, after the photographs taken at different periods of his life which we furnish in the present volume. Suffice it to say that, whatever he may be mentally, he is not bodily a giant, but of a quite middle stature, and rather inclined to obesity, though in his later years he has considerably lost weight. An author-journalist thus describes his appearance before the University of Saskatchewan, in 1912, there to give the first of a series of lectures on anthropological subjects:

"As he stood before the audience of professors and students crowding the lecture room in the Collegiate Institute,<sup>1</sup> Father Morice presented the appearance of a strong personality. His figure is rotund for all his missionary labours, but his broad forehead and strong, heavy eyebrows bespoke the intellectual worker. His voice is strong and his speech ready."<sup>2</sup>

The following lines of another author, written some years before, will complete the physical portrait of our hero, while giving a discreet hint at his dispositions:

"Robust in build, though not an Anak in height, his manner is hearty and jovial, and on his cheek are the ruddy hues of health. His fine full black beard

<sup>1</sup> That was before the University had buildings of its own.

<sup>2</sup> Telesphore Saint-Pierre, in *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2 March, 1912.

becomes him well. A historical painter would find him an invaluable model—he might sit for a mediæval king, for a Greek philosopher, or for any of the Hebrew prophets, with perhaps the exception of Jeremiah. . . . Father Morice is a good all-round example of plain living, hard working and high thinking."<sup>3</sup>

Morally speaking, two of his characteristics which are most in evidence consist in that kindness—at times qualified by a certain roughness of expression—and that obligingness which is so liable to be abused, when not allied to that self-assertiveness which is foreign to his make-up. According to the Irish editor of the Toronto *Catholic Register*, he is no less remarkable for his simplicity and easiness of access.

There is a simple unassuming priest here at St. Mary's, Winnipeg, but he is quite an authority on everything which pertains to the Déné aboriginal nations or peoples. When the British Scientists<sup>4</sup> were here in session, they sent for him, and the anthropological section was delighted with his description of the language, habits and customs of these particular peoples. He has written several books which are what might be called "the last word on the subject," and has a reputation with ethnologists and students of Indian folk-lore the world over.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Bernard McEvoy, in *Vancouver Province*, May 31, 1904.

<sup>4</sup> Of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

<sup>5</sup> *Ubi suprad*, Sept. 30, 1909. Father Morice's great work on the Catholic Church in the West had not yet appeared. Naturally of a retiring disposition, he has practically led the life of a recluse since he has been taken out of his element, Indian life and environment. He never takes part in public affairs, is never seen in a place reserved to the clergy for Church functions, even on the occasion of the funeral of a friend. In a word, to invite him to a party or entertainment is almost tantamount to putting him on the rack.

This did not prevent him from being once accused by a high party (sometimes referred to without being otherwise specified in these pages) of seeking public notice! A report on an election in which a question of a religious nature was indirectly at stake had appeared in the principal Winnipeg paper, which gave quite a distorted account of what had happened. As our friend was, by the merest accident, in the region

This *bonhomie* of our subject, joined to the aforesaid characteristics, must have contributed not a little to the unpleasantnesses he experienced at the hands of people who imagined that his apparent naïveté and his repugnance for causing pain left him an easy prey. Except in a few cases, when particularly excited—for he is not phlegmatic—or in an exceptionally jovial mood, he cannot be said to be quick at repartee. But allow him to answer on paper, then he can more than hold his own, as have admitted some of his opponents who had to suffer from his inflexible logic or mordant sarcasm. He has sustained numberless discussions on points of history, anthropology or others, and we fail to see how it could be truthfully said that he ever came out of them second best. Clearness and incisiveness proper to the French mental temperament are much in evidence in his controversies with, at times, quiet, but none the less effective, irony, which often puts his adversaries in an unenviable plight.

By far the most characteristic trait of his psychological make-up, one which has been the source of most of his difficulties, is his unconquerable love of truth and justice, such as he understands them. In the same way as, according to the London *Spectator*, "he has a very evident desire to get at every particle of truth" when he writes, even so in private life he

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where said election had taken place, he was induced by the local clergy to set matters right in a letter which was sent to that paper.

When he returned home, the first thing he saw on the table of the recreation hall of his community was that same paper opened at the page containing his letter, with the ejaculation "Bravo! well done?" pencilled on the margin by some fellow priest. But on the morrow he received the visit of his Provincial, who smilingly read him a communication from the great man in question, who asked him to curb the priestly writer in his literary activities, because, he claimed, he "liked too much to show himself off," *il aimait trop à se produire!* Verily, prejudice is responsible for many blunders!

hates with his whole heart falsehood and injustice. There are cases, however, when truth is not welcomed; hence the shocks from which the inferior has always more to suffer than the superior. Our hero is not tractable enough when the interests of these two noble virtues are at stake, and he boasts of the fact he could not, even when the good graces of those in power are the price of cowardly concessions, act the part of an opportunist—too often the road to success. Fortunately for his peace of mind, ambition and honours are the least of his cares. He has several times refused promotion; all he wants is facility, or at any rate possibility, for work.

From the foregoing we can easily infer that he is nothing if not frank and outspoken. Some claim that he possesses in too high a degree those sometimes embarrassing qualities, which may easily become defects. If spurred to indignation by evident disregard of truth or justice, he becomes powerless against the impulsion of his esteem for these two qualities. This, of course, was especially the case at a certain time when mental work under most untoward circumstances such as the lack of silence and quiet around him, had afflicted him with a tinge of neurasthenia.

Nay, his very consideration for truth and justice may, in the opinion of some people, give place to what they will take for stubbornness, if not pride. Yet, if shown to be wrong, he will admit it on the spot, not only formally and explicitly, but without the least uneasiness or any feeling of humiliation. He will even run out of his way in order to confess that, on this or that particular point, he was mistaken.

It is related of a saint who had been robbed by highwaymen that, being asked whether he had not anything else on his person, he had answered in the

negative. Remembering afterwards that he had some pieces of money sewed in his belt, he was pressed by remorse for having told an untruth, and ran after the robbers, offering them what he had just thought of. Father Morice never claimed to be a saint or anything approaching one; but we do really believe, knowing as we do his regard for truth, that, if convinced that he was mistaken in a contention, statement or surmise, he would find something like a satisfaction in imitating the above-mentioned holy man. This does not mean at all that he will not persistently defend an opinion as long as he deems it the expression of truth, for he will.

As a corollary of those dispositions, he is ever ready to sympathize with, and champion, the cause of the weak when he imagines them the victims of the strong. That is, no doubt, what prompted an opportunist, one of those who are careful to see which way the wind blows before they act or speak, to remark that Father Morice was always on the side of bad causes.

In the best organizations, the human element in their direction is occasionally apparent. Either personal interest or wounded pride is at times responsible for injustices, while other times really good intentions, which too often neglect private rights, will also have a like result. In his own Church, a most deserving religious institute was totally altered in import and purpose, and transformed into an organization of quite a different kind. The higher authorities acted evidently within their rights; but because that transformation was obtained through deceit and duplicity, Father Morice, after he had studied all the documents connected with the case, could not help siding with the parties he thought wronged by the change. He

was taken to task by interested individuals, but that did not affect his peace of mind: *fiat justitia, ruat cælum!*<sup>6</sup> is his slogan. He remains only too pleased to champion "bad causes" of that kind!

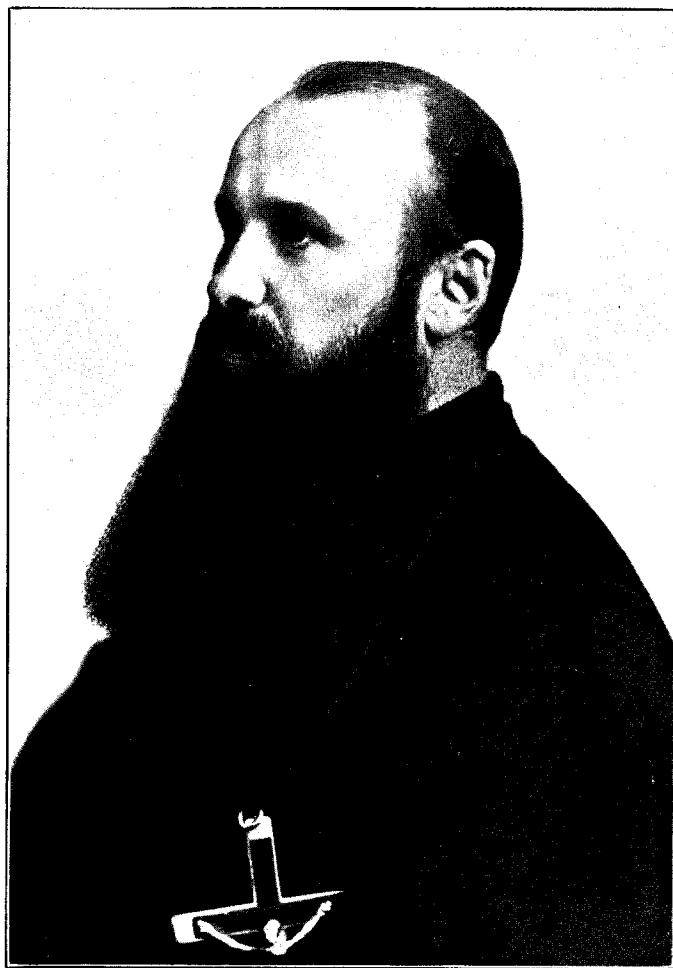
Another trait to which it seems scarcely worth the while to call attention after all we have already had on the subject, is his love of work. Idleness, especially of the mental variety, is something he cannot stand under any pretense. In fact, this is a shortcoming which has never been brought to his door. Will it be believed that even that laborious disposition could have ever become for him occasions for difficulties? Mental labour, to be satisfactory, requires silence, and some there are for which silence, despite all rules and regulations, is very trying. Everybody does not consider life with the same seriousness.

Father Morice, therefore, has been a great worker. Of him it can be said that he did taste the joy that springs from labour.<sup>7</sup> The twenty-five odd volumes to his credit are of themselves good witnesses to what he has achieved in one only of his many lines of activity. That is not enough for him. "Always the best!" is another of his mottoes, and this explains many of his successes. We received communication of a recent letter which would seem to confirm this. It emanated from one of the higher superiors, a Provincial, or head of a religious province, whom the old priest had known as a child in France. That letter reads as follows:

Yes, I am the provincial of X. And you may feel assured that it is with my whole heart that I sign the subscription blank you send me. No, indeed, I do not forget the time when you were teaching us English at Pontmain;

<sup>6</sup> "Let justice be done, though the heavens should fall."

<sup>7</sup> Longfellow, *Masque of Pandora*, Pt. VI, "In the Garden."



FATHER MORICE, *at.* 50



and I must add that those were the only real lessons in that language which I ever received during my juniorate. If other professors had followed the same method as you, I would not have come out of Sion<sup>8</sup> without knowing one English word more than what I had learnt with you.

And your good stories about the missions, I cannot forget them either. Your passage at Pontmain is as vivid in my mind as if it had happened yesterday. And yet that was thirty-three years ago.<sup>9</sup>

As to the anecdotes mentioned by that Provincial, they bring us to a peculiarity of our friend's ministrations, also discernible in his writings of an historical character and others. We mean an originality which usually engenders interest. In his sermons Father Morice would, of course, give expression to the same doctrines and embody the same precepts as other Catholic priests, but he would generally give them out in a different way, by striking comparisons perhaps retained from his Indian preaching days. A theologian would probably have found them little to his taste, with no depth or learned distinctions. But our subject contends that you do not win souls by hair-splitting, and what he aims at when in the pulpit is the betterment of his hearers. That is enough for him.

Moreover, his instructions are always flavoured and seasoned with traits, which, he claims, will remain in the mind and influence the conduct long after other parts of the sermon have been forgotten. So much so, indeed, that, in this connection, he practically does the reverse of most pulpit orators. Instead of choosing and expounding a Scripture text, he has from

<sup>8</sup> N.D. de Sion in Lorraine. See Chapter I, p. 000.

<sup>9</sup> This is dated Aug. 15, 1929, and signed by a great theologian. Father Morice professes to be unable to tell us what is meant by the particular excellence of his teaching method herewith referred to, unless it be his usual system of always doing things the best he could.

the start a story on his mind, towards which he makes everything converge.

He does not profess to be a preacher endowed with anything like eloquence, though he has, even in France, moved audiences to tears or shaken them by various emotions. But there is no denying that he can force attention to what he says. In short, even when in the pulpit he is more or less of a historian.

Another cause of his success is his untiring perseverance. We will take as evidence of this his very last and greatest venture in the philologic field. In 1896, as we already know, he repaired to France<sup>10</sup> to publish a French-Carrier Dictionary, which had cost him eleven years of labour. A real Mecaenas and patron of that kind of literature was to defray the expense attending its printing. But when the missionary reached his native land, he found the generous gentleman had lost his entire fortune in what is known in France as the "Panama crash," and the priest-philologist had to take back his manuscript, which was destroyed by fire in 1910.

Nothing daunted by the disaster, our author set upon annulling its consequences, and hit upon a plan which was a vast improvement on the first. Instead of a mere dictionary, which could not alone teach the language, he evolved in his mind an entirely new conception,<sup>11</sup> a big work, in English this time, which combines within its covers all the advantages of a very complete and up-to-date grammar and a full vocabulary. With the help of the original sources of his burnt dictionary, which had escaped the fire, and his own thorough knowledge of the language, he worked

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<sup>10</sup> Which he has done three times in fifty years, but always on business.

<sup>11</sup> Another evidence of originality.

at his new book for many years, without ever getting disheartened by the difficulties of his task, and that under terrible circumstances of which a discreet word or two will be found in our next chapter.

When finished, the work could, of course, find no publisher without the necessary funds being guaranteed. None but an extremely limited circle of scientists, special scholars and learned societies care for such literature. In vain did the author knock at many doors: no publisher could be tempted to attempt such a big and little profitable undertaking as the printing of such a book.<sup>12</sup>

Yet Father Morice did not give it up. He had an enticing circular printed and sent to all the parties likely to subscribe. This met with as great a success as could have been expected, and as even the large sum of money thus secured did not suffice, he perseveringly begged, and finally received, from the British Columbia Government, a grant which at last allowed printing operations on the work to commence.

To-day that monumental work, which the author calls his *magnum opus*, and is bound to greatly enhance his reputation in the philological world, is in the hands of the printers in Vienna, Austria, who have already achieved good progress on it. Nothing like perseverance! Without neglecting more pressing labours, even of a literary complexion, he has been at it one way or another ever since 1885!

It represents, and fully exemplifies, a most complex and proportionately rich language, "whose words are counted by the million, and are formed according to rules which cannot but excite admiration, and whose verbs are remarkable for such grammatical

<sup>12</sup> Which may contain over 1,200 large in-4° pages.

niceties that they form over fifty different species."<sup>13</sup> To which may be added that the author of that big work has ever been, and remains to this day, the only white man to have acquired it.

A last feature of Father Morice's personality which it is now scarcely necessary to bring into relief, is his remarkable versatility. Few indeed are the branches of literature, science or even arts which he has not cultivated. For, apart from his exertions as a missionary, which, we repeat, he always considered his essential and professional work, he has been a writer, an author of books and pamphlets, an anthropologist, a controversialist, a journalist and a lecturer; an artist, a printer, a lithographer, a photographer, a stenographer, a draughtsman and an inventor; a traveller, an explorer, a geographer and a cartographer, without counting the colonizing<sup>14</sup> he has done as a patriot.

To mention a detail which has not been hinted at in these pages, he has even dabbled in musical composition. While bandmaster at St. Mary's Mission, he composed a few pieces for his boys. Since that time, a motet of his, *Signum magnum*, of eight pages, with solos, duets and choruses, as well as accompaniment, has even had the honour of being printed. As to his right to the title of journalist, we shall see in the next chapter that he was at one time the editor of a Winnipeg paper, and, shortly after, founded another in Saskatchewan.

Enough of those personal traits, to mention which was necessary, were it only to render our next chapter more easy to understand. Father Morice is still

<sup>13</sup> From the Author's Circular.

<sup>14</sup> Which resulted in the establishment of at least one new parish, St. Front, in Saskatchewan.

very much alive, and he might take amiss any more details of a personal nature—though many more have been published about him.

And the “others”? We should not forget that “He and Others” is the title of this chapter. Who, then, are the latter? They are, mostly, the British Columbia pioneers with whom “he” came in contact during the twenty-eight years of his stay in that province. Since this is a book of reminiscences, as are all Memoirs, we keep within its scope, and imagine that some readers will not object to it, when we pass them in review—*et hæc olim meminisse juvabit.*<sup>15</sup>

It goes without saying that, being naturally of a retiring disposition and living most of the time he passed west of the Rockies among the Northern Indians, with no white people amongst them, he had very few occasions to meet any of the noted pioneers of the Pacific province. A few of them, however, he did know, whom he is proud to remember in his latter days. Dr. W. W. Walkem has published an interesting book of personal reminiscences,<sup>16</sup> which prompts our own author occasionally to say mentally: “I, too, knew him.”

We will limit ourselves to those who are no longer in the land of the living.

Amongst statesmen or politicians is one who could not be very old, in spite of his beautiful white hair, if he were still alive. We mean the late Sir Richard McBride, Premier of the Province when Morice met him. He then found him very able and polite, which, he immediately adds, means very shrewd, if somewhat

<sup>15</sup> “The remembrance of these things will prove a source of future pleasure.”

<sup>16</sup> *Stories of Early British Columbia.* Vancouver, 1914.

of an opportunist. It sometimes helps to have two opposite elements in one's immediate ascendants: one can then appeal to both Catholics and Orangemen when their votes are needed. Father Morice also knew quite well Theodore Davie, who was St. Mary's Mission lawyer in the affairs of the Matsqui dyke, which, of course, passed by the missionaries' land and was not at first satisfactory. That was in 1881. He does not mention another Premier, also deceased, the late John Oliver, because when he met him the priest was no longer a citizen of British Columbia.

To these may perhaps be added the late Sir Henri Joly de Lotbinière, that perfect type of gentleman who was then Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, and whose acquaintance he felt all the more happy to make as Sir Henri was in reality a compatriot of his, having been born at Epernay, France.

Senator James Reid, being a resident of the Quesnel district, Morice could not help being well acquainted with him. He esteemed him as well as his wife, whom, he claims, was a typical woman, since she was not a little curious. The missionary was booked to give, on June 2, 1904, a public lecture in the City Hall of growing Vancouver for the benefit of the Museum, and she had read in the papers that the lecturer was going to tell his audience how the mosquitoes had once saved his life.<sup>17</sup> On the day before, she came to see him and said:

“Father, I am more sorry than I can say that I will not be able to attend your lecture to-morrow. I have friends coming from the East, and I shall have to receive and entertain them just at the time when you will be telling of your experiences in the North.

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<sup>17</sup> Chapter IV, p. 75.

Meantime, would it not be possible for you to tell me how mosquitoes saved your life?"

Robert McLeese, the "ponderous Member for Soda Creek," as the press of the time used to dub him because of his corpulency, was likewise one of the public men whose society Father Morice would occasionally enjoy in the early eighties. So was Dr. McGuigan, at one time (but not long) Mayor of Vancouver, as well as Mr. F. Carter Cotton, member of the Legislative Assembly and editor of the *News-Advertiser*.

In this connection our own pioneer delights in remarking that whenever he feels sore at the number of papers that have been accumulating on, and around, his desk, he has only to remember the litter of old sheets of all descriptions on the floor of that gentleman's office, and he gets better.

The mention of the *News-Advertiser* also brings back to his mind the vision of the early development of Vancouver. Our missionary had seen the place when it was a mere region of big trees, by the shore of which was a saw-mill, Granville, with a few shacks for the employees. He was, therefore, not a little astonished when, in the course of one of his rare absences from the North (in 1888), he found, instead of the forest he had known, quite an embryo of a city—not, indeed, very substantially built at first: for instance, the present Catholic stone cathedral had still as a precursor a modest wooden building in which he officiated, yet with the evident pretension of becoming a metropolis one day. Gigantic public works were going on everywhere. Trees were felled by daytime and their immense stumps dynamited at six p.m. of every week day. The sound of hammer and saw was heard on all sides, and even the shrill

whistle of the *News-Advertiser* reminded people that they were not in a village.

There must now be but few inhabitants of Vancouver who can have an idea of the immense amount of labour involved, for instance, in the creation and development of what is to-day Granville Street. When Father Morice first saw it in the making, it was full of ups and downs, the first of which were being levelled down and the second filled in at the cost of great expenditure of money.

But we must not forget our pioneer's acquaintances in British Columbia. One of the most honourable, in his estimation, was Justice John Foster McCreight, a convert to Catholicism and ex-Premier of the province, whom he remembers quietly saying his rosary in the tram which was then commencing to ply between New Westminster and Vancouver. He also met, but this time at his own home, the Hon. Edgar Dewdney, who, later on, honoured him with a request for information on the topography of the region between Fort George and Clinton, or Lillooet, as that gentleman was then one of a group contemplating the building of a railway between North and South through the inland part of the province.

We should not pass over the mention of judges Peter O'Reilly, whom Father Morice received at his Stuart Lake home, quite a pioneer and a well-known figure in British Columbia history, as every one knows, and George A. Walkem, before whom he had to testify in a case of illegal shooting of an Indian by a white man.

Pete O'Reilly, as he was familiarly called, was indeed a pioneer, yet quite a newcomer when compared to a lady whom our priestly friend met at Lac la



SENATOR REID



Hache, when on his way to William's Lake in 1882. This was no less a person than the relict of that original character and great fur-trader, Peter Skene Ogden, of whom Father Morice has had so much to say in his *History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia*, and whose portrait he copied for that book from a painting in the same house. The lady was a Crow Indian, and must have been very old, though she seemed well except for some impediment in her legs.<sup>18</sup> She was a Catholic, and was proud to show to the young traveller a prayer-book in syllabics she seemed to value very highly. Her husband had been the monarch of the North, and had never failed to act accordingly.<sup>19</sup>

Another remarkable woman with Indian blood in her veins, whom Father Morice knew and who was born in British Columbia, but had left for eastern parts when only eighteen months old, was Sister Connolly, of the Grey Nuns, who first saw the light of day at Fort St. James, on July 26, 1830. Her Christian name

<sup>18</sup> This had been written for some time when we found in T. C. Elliott's monograph of her husband that she died at Lac la Hache in January, 1886, aged 98. When the priest saw her there, she must therefore have been 94. Elliott calls her (*Peter Skene Ogden, Fur Trader*, p. 17) "a remarkable woman from the Spokane tribe of Indians (if family tradition is correct)," and says that she was a widow and six years older than Ogden when he took her to wife according to the way of the country. As to her nationality, Father Morice's plea for believing that she belonged to the Crow tribe of Indians is a remark several times repeated by two very old Catholic priests who knew the couple quite well, to the effect that Ogden was wont to refer to his wife as *mon corbeau*, my Crow. Both missionaries had arrived in 1844 in Oregon, and passed that remark independently from one another. They knew quite well the Spokans, and could not possibly have confounded them with the Crows, a tribe of a different aboriginal family (that of the Sioux). Those missionaries were Fathers G. Blanchet and Ch. Pandosy.

<sup>19</sup> *Hist. of the N.I. of B.C.*, pp. 171-240 of third Canadian edition; also T. C. Elliott, *op. cit.*, *ap. Oregon Historical Quarterly*, vol. XI, No. 3, Sept., 1910.

was Marguerite, and she was the twelfth<sup>20</sup> child, as Lady Douglas was the first, of Chief Factor William Connolly and *Miyo-nipiy*, or Fairleaf, a daughter of a Cree chief. When barely ten years old, Marguerite Connolly and *Miyo-nipiy*, who longed for the freedom of her western plains and forests, returned from Montreal, where they had gone to live; but on their way back they did not go farther than St. Boniface, where the child was taken care of by Mgr. Provencher's housekeeper, while her mother was boarding with a local family—Mr. Connolly all the time paying for both. On the advent of the nuns in 1844, both mother and daughter became their very first boarders, and, a year later (August 5, 1845), Marguerite entered their novitiate as their very first candidate for admission into their Order. She had been a religieuse there almost half a century when Father Morice saw her, in 1896. She passed away at the same place on October 7, 1904.

Other nuns, also British Columbia pioneers, whom the same knew better, because living at the same place as they, were Sisters Luména and Mary Conception, two of the very first nuns who arrived in Victoria in the course of 1858. Both of them were stationed at St. Mary's Mission, at the time when our future missionary was there preparing himself for the priesthood.

Speaking of pioneer women, we must not forget one who was among the first to settle in the Northern Interior. She came in 1862, at the time of the mines, and remained there ever since. We mean Mrs. A. D. McInnes, whom Father Morice had to visit periodically

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\* Whereby it will be seen that the author of *The Pioneer Women of Vancouver Island* is scarcely right when he speaks of Lady Douglas having had "two sisters" (*Op. cit.*, p. 10; Victoria, 1928). She had five, and six brothers (After documents in the Archives of St. Boniface Grey Nuns).

in his capacity of a priest, she being of his faith, as also were her children.

As to her husband, there can be no old-timer left in that region (of Alexandria) who does not remember him and his rather pompous ways: shrewd and thrifty because typically Scotch, and, in public, apparently never forgetting his title of J.P.

In a different sphere but none the less a true pioneer, was that real gentleman, Peter Dunlevy, whose honoured guest our missionary often was before he was stationed at Stuart Lake, and sometimes after. Hospitality, in the eighties, was, throughout the Cariboo country, perhaps the dominant social virtue, and Father Morice always remembers with a feeling of gratitude how he was welcomed, not only at Soda Creek where lived Mr. Dunlevy, but at the Australian ranch, eleven miles north thereof, whose joint owners and generous hosts, though not of his faith as was the latter, treated him as well as anybody could have done.

Between the two places, but on the other side of the Fraser, had lately settled a Mr. William Adams, afterwards a member of the Provincial Legislature, in whose house the priest had once to tie the nuptial knot; after which (as he himself confides it to his friends) the gentleman was quite surprised to see that he did not kiss the bride, as he claimed that all Protestant ministers do.<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Adams was a farmer. A toiler (?) of another kind, a rancher and a more famous character in the Middle North, was "Doc" English, mentioned in Mr. Walkem's book. He had married a half-breed

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<sup>21</sup> We are delighted to hear at the last moment that Mr. Adams is still alive, "well preserved and active," though now in the Lillooet country, according to Mr. John Hosie, provincial librarian at Victoria.

who, though much younger, did not survive him. As she was a Catholic, Father Morice had visited her and left her quite well in the morning. As he reached Soda Creek on that very same day, he was dumbfounded to learn that she was dead.

"Impossible; she was in the best of health this morning," he could not help remarking.

"Yes, but you know that she was subject to fits. She died in one," he was told.

"How do you know it?"

"By telegraph."

Another pioneer, mentioned by Walkem, whom our missionary well knew, is Samuel Withrow, Dunlevy's son-in-law, who was then one of the only three settlers of the Chilcotin valley, the other two being Riske (or Riskie) and Tom Hance.

Of Victoria pioneers, apart from those already mentioned, Father Morice knew very few. That city lay too far away from his headquarters. Those more or less in the public eye who have since joined the great majority were almost limited to the King's Printer, Col. Wolfenden, Dr. James D. Helmsken, librarian and author R. Edward Gosnell, and especially W. Vowell, the Indian Superintendent, whom he visited in his "eyerie," as he was proud to call his residence. This was not without reason, for, independently from its situation on a high rock, its master somewhat partook more of the eagle than of the dove, as must remember those who had to deal with him. Our friend and he always agreed.

We should not forget two Victoria scientists in different walks of life, the late John Fannin, curator of the Government Museum, who was a true naturalist and never seemed as much at home as among his stuffed birds and quadrupeds, and Dr. Charles

Frederic Newcombe, who also had a museum, but of his own, and was more of an anthropological scholar, who was always proud to show his collections to people, like Morice, who could appreciate them.

In Vancouver City, our clergyman had for a real friend a Baptist minister, Dr. Roland D. Grant, who at that time had taken to lecturing as a profession, and, after one of the priest's own lectures, once christened him "the Classic of the Woods," a name which was used by the local papers for some time. Dr. Grant never gave a lecture without sending him a special invitation thereto, accompanied by three or four tickets for his friends.

Others, like Captain and Mrs. Mellon, are still present to the memory of every Vancouverite. Father Morice visited them quite often, and, in connection with the former, whose peculiar ways will be remembered, he is not without some little feeling akin to remorse. He kept his audience so long when he gave his lecture in the City Hall that the last street car had just passed when the worthy officer went out—which means that it was eleven p.m. The way he ejaculated his "Great Scott! what are we going to do?" brought a smile to the bystanders who knew him, but caused the lecturer to feel almost guilty. A fourth Vancouverite worthy who must be dead by this time is Professor Edward Odlum, the father of the general of the same name, who honoured Father Morice with a visit at his temporary home, in the course of which both enjoyed a good chat on scientific subjects. As we write on, the name of Mr. B. McEvoy comes of itself to our pen. He was indeed a friend and honoured adviser of our hero. But we must refrain from quoting him among the veterans Father Morice knew, as he is still not only alive, but, despite appearances, scarcely an old

man as yet in his own estimation—only going on eighty-nine!!!

Among the New Westminster pioneers, our clergyman well remembers John Robson, a Methodist journalist and politician, whom opposition papers used to call "Honest John" when he was at the head of the British Columbia Cabinet. Also, and, better, such local men as William Keary, and a Mr. McDonough, both of them merchants, and the former a public man as well, without counting Captain William Irving, the Fraser River boatman.

George Christie Tunstall, a civic official of Kamloops, is also one of those old-timers whom Father Morice was acquainted with, no less than Dr. Wade, of the *Inland Sentinel*, with whom, because of similarity of tastes, printing and writing, the former was united by the ties of real friendship. Our missionary knew also, in 1881, the founder of that paper, Mark Hagan, an Irishman who retired in a house of the Oblates after he had disposed of his publication. Father Morice remembers quite well seeing him operate his primitive (Washington) press at Yale, where the *Inland Sentinel* was then located. As is well known, this was the very first press imported into British Columbia, by the late Bishop Demers, in preconfederation times. It was quite a job to strike off an edition of the little paper, and Hagan perspired copiously while at it.

As to the fur-traders worth mentioning, our friend recalls to mind the late Gavin Hamilton, a former incumbent of Fort St. James, well known to the readers of the *History of the Northern Interior*, and a Mr. Traill, perhaps still alive, who was a nephew of the lady writer of that name.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The authoress of *The Backwoods of Canada* and books on Canadian flowers.

A third, Mr. Roderick Macfarlane, a great pioneer of the Far North, whose labours under most trying circumstances did not meet with all the recognition they perhaps deserved, may, without exaggeration, be called Father Morice's bosom friend. He, indeed, did not know him very long in British Columbia, barely three years, when he was at the head of Fort Saint James, the buildings of which he greatly improved, as he had done at Fort Chippewyan; but he was to resume his acquaintance and associate with him later, in Winnipeg, where the dear old man was leading among books the life of a retired Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor.

Morice knew also, but not intimately, some British Columbian gold miners, among whom was Jim Mair, whom he merely saw; the famous (or infamous) "Twelve-Foot Davis," who ultimately became a trader, or conveyancer to the fur-traders east of the Rockies; last but not least, the French-Canadian, Vital Laforce,<sup>23</sup> better known under his Christian name, who discovered Vital Creek and, after having amassed and squandered several fortunes, finally perished by his own hands.

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<sup>23</sup> Or Lefort. P. A. Talbot, in his *West Garden of Canada* (p. 211; London, 1911) goes to the trouble of spinning quite an uncalled for, and unlikely, little bit of romance about his name. "What his baptismal name is no one knows," he declares, "but the Indians with their queer aptitudes called him *le fort vital*, meaning 'the strong life,' and this became twisted into Vital Lefort." Now this is a mere fancy on the part of Mr. Talbot. In the first place, Vital is a good Christian name, quite in common use among the French, as the calendar of the Catholic Church contains the feasts of two martyrs of that name in the course of the year.

And then *le fort vital*, whatever that may mean, does not stand for "the strong life." In the third place, who are those remarkable Indians who are supposed to have named, in words which are individually and separately French, but mean nothing when put together, a Canadian who already had a name, and whose father must have been known as Laforce, after the practice of the early French Canadians, who gave their fellows nicknames characteristic of a quality or defect: Lajoie, Lamalice, Lavertu, Latendresse, Lajeunesse, Lafortune, etc.?

Such are the most important of the British Columbia pioneers with whom the subject of these pages was more or less acquainted during his stay in that province. Another class of "others" which may fall within the scope of this chapter, is made up of those who listened to his lectures. For, as we have seen, lecturing was one of his achievements. Apart from scientific societies in the Old and the New Worlds, which he addressed on the subject of his Indians and his explorations, a number of audiences of less restricted character heard him. He was known as a lecturer from Quebec to Vancouver, to mention only Canada. His successes varied, being greatest in Quebec and Calgary. In the last of these places, he gave a memorable lecture to non-Catholics, who, after a few moments of coldness, during which they evidently studied their man, appreciated him so much that, with his inimitable *bonhomie* and naive-like freshness, it was with difficulty that he could speak, so hearty, so uproarious, was the laughter which his sayings and manners caused among his hearers. We have room for only the following extracts from a long account of it published by one of the Calgary papers:

Throughout the lecture Father Morice kept his audience in the best of humour by his sparkling wit, and altogether all agreed that it was an exceedingly interesting lecture. The Rev. Father is an ardent missionary, and, as a scientific explorer, he is second to none in the West . . .

At the conclusion of the lecture Rev. Dr. Herdman moved a vote of thanks to the distinguished conferencier, and spoke of his meeting him some years ago at Kamloops, of his book on New Caledonia, which was easily the best in Canada of its kind.<sup>24</sup>

Another kind of lecturing to the credit of our friend was for the benefit of the students of the University of

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<sup>24</sup> The *Calgary Albertan*, Oct. 25, 1906.

Saskatchewan, to whom he spoke one year on Northwest Canadian history, and, three years in succession, on anthropological subjects, such as the Age of Man, the Unity of Man, Man in America, the Evolution of Writing, and the like. His lectures were faithfully reported in both Saskatoon dailies, and made such an impression, even abroad, that a United States person wrote him to know whether he could have a copy of them when published. They were never printed, for the lecturer spoke only from notes.

Finally, the genial President of the University, Dr. Walter C. Murray, wanted him to become a regular professor; but, as this would have entailed a change of residence for the priest, and somewhat interfered with the prosecution of his other work, Father Morice had to decline the offer. Then came the Great War, and with it the enlistment of many of his hearers. So that he had to break away from all active work at that establishment, of which he keeps the very best souvenir.



**TRIALS**



## CHAPTER XI

### TRIALS

[1900-1925]

WE HAVE seen that, because of the great labours entailed by the charge of an immense district, Father Morice occasionally wondered at his extreme happiness, and apprehended lest this might one day change to troubles. That change was bound to come, he thought. As if to make it doubly painful, it came from the quarter from which he least expected it.

He was doing good, a good nobody else could do because of his knowledge of the language and of the influence he had acquired over his people. He could never imagine that, through no fault of his—unless his wish to ward off a great peril be considered a fault—he would be prevented from doing that good. He never dreamed that he would have to leave his missions at the mercy of a party who, having lived with a totally different race of Indians, with nothing like the subtle poison hidden in the sociology of the Northerners, had not the faintest idea how to manage them.

The trials that were now to overtake him were of two kinds: those which may be regarded as due to outsiders or fortuitous circumstances, and those which originated at home, from persons from whom he thought he had a right to expect encouragement. For the former he blames nobody, the latter he leaves to a Higher Tribunal to judge.

It would be more pleasant to pass over those

difficulties; but would it be fair to our missionary? Would it be just to the reader to show him but the bright side of the medal while hiding the reverse? How, then, could the momentous changes in the career of the subject of these pages be understood and so many unfortunate destructions and losses be accounted for? We will pass as lightly as possible over those sad happenings; but, without blaming anybody, we feel that we must relate something of them.

And, first, as to his trials for which nobody can be held responsible, or at least in which those above him had no hand.

There lived at Tache, on Lake Stuart, an old woman by the name of Pauline, who never ceased complaining of the treatment she received at the hands of her son, or rather of the neglect he meted out to her. The lot of old people was formerly very miserable, and because of that Father Morice was ready enough to think her complaints well founded. On the other hand, her son, *Ootekrez*, the Crooked One, seemed in spite of his name to be a decent fellow, of kindly disposition and, for an Indian, blessed with a numerous family.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, on that account, he felt unequal to doing what he might have wished to do for his mother.

As to Pauline, she gave the impression of being one of those old people very hard to please, cantankerous and quarrelsome old souls, to be found under all climes, who pass most of their time in recriminations. Passing by Tache on his way to Babine, her pastor received her usual bundle of complaints and consoled her as best he could. Then he spoke to her son, who promised thenceforth to do his best for her.

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<sup>1</sup> Families of seven or eight living children are very rare among the natives, due, chiefly, to infantile mortality and abnormally long nursing.

Judge therefore of the priest's surprise and sorrow when, on his way back to his central Mission, he was told that the old woman had just hanged herself! This was, in pre-Christian times, very common among women, not because of unrequited love, an accident which was not much thought of among the Indians, but because of the inhuman treatment the widows, for instance, had to submit to, who were then the most pitiable slaves one could imagine.<sup>2</sup>

Pauline's case was probably one of self-delusion, if not of a natural peevishness aggravated by old age. It was none the less painful to her spiritual guide, as well as to her own relatives. This was in the early years of the latter's stay at Stuart Lake. A trial of a different kind affected him some years later, quite a distance from there.

In order to promote a healthy emulation among his people, Father Morice had long been extolling in their presence the progress accomplished by the southern Coast Indians under the leadership of Bishop Durieu. From his accounts of them had sprung in the heart of a few a desire to go and see with their own eyes. As the priest had, one year, to go to his superior on business, it was agreed that two of the most prominent of the Fort George aborigines, who had gathered furs enough to pay for their passage to the Coast

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We have mentioned the Ootekrez family, may we not be allowed to relate a little occurrence which will show to what extent that last failing was at times indulged in? Father Morice had lately taught a new hymn at his place when the Tache Indians were gathered there. The priest passing by Tache, Ootekrez' wife, who like all good mothers was proud of her children, called to herself a daughter six or seven years old, and made her sing the new hymn, for which she immediately received a medal from the missionary, and from her mother . . . a good feed from the breast!

<sup>3</sup> Their hair was immediately cut, they had to content themselves with mere dirty tatters and, above all, live in a most abject state of subjection to the relatives of their former lord and master.

should accompany him. These were Louis, a quiet, stalwart Indian of good parentage, and James, the eldest son of chief Isidore, a married man of perhaps twenty-eight or thirty, with a family and a great reputation as a hunter.

To properly understand what is to follow, it must be borne in mind that the little party left Fort George in June, at a time when the freshets, then inevitable, transform the upper Fraser into a veritable torrent, bristling with noisy billows even in those stretches where, three or four months later, the surface of the water is as unruffled as one can imagine. This will tell what the rapids may become in the spring.

Fifteen miles below Fort George, there is a canyon formed, not by a narrowing of the river bed, but by a number of rocky islands which leave no safe passage for any craft, save at a particular point three yards wide, at most, when the water is not high.

Arrived at the head of the rapid, the priest and his two companions emptied their canoe of its contents, which they took down, after which the two Indians returned for their embarkation.

Father Morice was quietly resting on the pile of blankets and other impedimenta below, when he was suddenly startled by something like a suppressed cry of an ominous portent. Quick as lightning, he ran to the shore, and, breaking with his arms through the fringe of foliage which bordered the stream, he anxiously looked up in the direction of the rapid, but saw nothing else than the angry billows springing up to man's height, to immediately splash down with their fury abated.

"Perhaps they meant to tell me that they were starting, so that I might realize the quickness of their flight over the water," thought the priest.



PORTRAGE BETWEEN DRIFTWOOD AND BEAR LAKE  
*Photo by F. C. Swannell, L.S.*



But he had no sooner sat down again than he heard the same shrill, yet subdued, scream nearer at hand, and presently he saw, floating just under the lee of one of the islands, a crate containing two little black foxes his Indians were taking to an amateur, and, right in the middle of the stream, poor Louis apparently sitting on the water, in reality astride on the upturned canoe, and using his right hand as a paddle.

As soon as he caught sight of the priest:

*Soocho spa thenadôntli* "do pray for me," he cried out.

And Father Morice declares that he never prayed with half as much fervour as then. This was all the more necessary as, a quarter of a mile below, there was another rapid which, under the circumstances, it would have been courting death to try to shoot. So, before reaching that dangerous place, his Indian had the good inspiration to let go the capsized canoe and swim ashore.<sup>3</sup> As to his companion, all search failed to reveal the least trace of him.

This was indeed a sad accident, no less than a sore trial for the missionary, considering that the man had died in his service and that, according to native law, he was responsible for his demise.<sup>4</sup> Yet so thoroughly Christian had become his charge that, when, on the morrow, the drowned man's father and mother, together with his poor widow, came down accompanied by a second canoe for the priest and men to man it, even the heart-rending cries of the women could not

<sup>3</sup> That canoe having been seen floating down by the whites of Quesnel, who were expecting the coming of the priest, the announcement of his drowning was immediately telegraphed to the newspapers, with the result that Father Morice's confrères had prayed for the repose of his soul when he came upon them almost as a ghost.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was reported in distant parts that the chief had killed him as a sort of compensation for the death of his son.

influence the old chief into saying one unkind word. On the contrary, seeing how affected was his pastor,<sup>5</sup> he tried to console him.

"He died in the service of our father, after having fulfilled his religious duties at the end of the retreat; he could not have hoped for a better end," assured the heroic man.

We might stop the story here; but Father Morice has something no less striking and much more consoling to add when he relates it. It may be worth repeating here.

One of the most touching practices of the northern Catholic Indians is that of assembling, after morning prayers recited in the church, around the graves of their departed ones, and of sending up to God special supplications for them. This is to them an immense consolation, a real balm to the wound of their hearts. But the chief's son had no grave! This was to his people a cross which, in course of time, almost bereft them of reason. If his bones could only be found! With this end in view, the poor distracted father, at great personal inconvenience and no little expense, went down the Fraser as far as he could find aboriginal

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<sup>5</sup> The terrible position Father Morice was in, and the uncontrollable emotions to which he was a prey, will be better understood when it is known that, endowed with a most sensitive heart, he feels for his Indians the most real love, which accounts for that which they themselves show him. Thus when the victim of an accident, which will be related in our next chapter, had been brought home, he went not only to view the corpe, but also to console the women who were crying to their heart's content, as they were wont to do even in case of a natural death, before their pastor had succeeded in eliminating what was exaggerated, and sometimes forced, in those signs of mourning.

He did start to give them good advice in that direction, tried to comfort them with kind words based on Christian motives, and begged them not to be too extravagant in their demonstrations of grief. But when he had himself seen the gaping hole made by the double discharge of a shot gun in the side of poor Jean-Baptiste, he could restrain himself no longer, and burst into tears, so that he had precipitately to leave the place, returning home with a sense of having failed in his mission.

dwellings on its banks, and enquired about his son. Nobody had ever even heard of a corpse floating down, or of human bones being discovered in the vicinity. So that the poor man had to come back disconsolate and hopeless!

Time went on in a melancholy fashion for the old chief and his wife, until, some three years later, on a certain September day when the water had considerably receded, his two nephews,<sup>6</sup> Joseph and Johnny Kwa, two most truthful fathers of families,<sup>7</sup> went down to Quesnel to dispose of their furs at a better price than they could realize at Fort George. On their way back, the water was getting so low that wide sandy beaches would appear below some turnings in the river. Arrived at one of them, they landed to have their lunch. While one of them was preparing the meal, the other looked for dry wood to light a fire, when his ear was struck by what seemed to him like the peculiar kind of whistling between the fingers used by the natives to call one another when at a distance.

"Strange," he thought. "We are miles and miles away from all habitations; who can it be?"

But seeing nobody, he imagined that he was mistaken, and set again to collect firewood. Immediately the same whistling was heard again, and, what was still more incomprehensible, this was in the direction of the water! His scrutinizing of the environs bringing nobody in sight, the Indian took fright and ran back to his brother.

"Did you hear anything?" he asked.

"Indeed I did," answered the latter, when a third

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<sup>6</sup> Do not forget that, with Carriers and Babines, a maternal nephew is more than a son, and that two first cousins call themselves brothers, as was done in biblical times.

<sup>7</sup> The first of whom was afterwards to become head chief of Fort George.

whistle, louder than the others, was heard by the two brothers.

Both of them went where it seemed to come from, and lo! on the sandy beach a white object struck their sight, which, on being examined, proved to be a human skull. Scratching the sand off, a whole skeleton was then unearthed, with a cartridge belt around its waist line, and with particularities in the teeth which made it clear that it was that of their lost cousin!

Religiously and carefully they washed the bones and, soon after, the old chief and family had the consolation of their life: they could pray on the grave of their beloved one.

So that, after all, if there was on the whole a trial for Father Morice and especially for the chief, the incident was not without some brighter aspects.

Alas! the same could not be said of the other trials which remain for us to chronicle. Before relating those, we might mention ill-health resulting from overwork. When, for instance, he went to bless a new church the people of Pinche, on Stuart Lake, had put up, the priest could not stand erect, but had to remain bent to one side in a most undignified way. This was nothing for our indefatigable worker. He had his remedy, or rather the Indians had a remedy for him: they would bleed him by plunging the blade of a sharp knife into the ailing part, and, for at least one hour or two, he would be free from pain.

No, it was not accidents, it was not illness which were reputed as real trials by him. What counted in his eyes was the fact that he had to suffer morally from a party he thought should have helped him, inasmuch as he had previously lauded his way of dealing with the Indians.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> As testified Fathers Chirouze, Peytavin, Rocher and a fourth of whom Father Morice is not quite sure.

The trial of his life came upon him as a bolt from the blue by the end of 1903 and in the spring of 1904. Father Morice had been given an assistant in the person of a poor ill-balanced individual who, at first all aflame in his behalf, gradually cooled down when his superior was away (therefore through no fault of the latter), until, after having set everything upside down, especially with regard to the capital question of Christian education, he thought himself justified in leaving the country. Charity forbids us to be more precise.

When Father Morice had himself to go down to see the doctor and publish his *History of the N. I. of British Columbia*, whom did he find on the way, sent up to replace him during the whole winter, but the poor unbalanced man who had already done such an immense moral damage to his Indians! The older priest immediately protested, and begged in two Latin telegrams that he be allowed to turn back. The superior of both, who did not as yet know a word of the question directed the younger to continue his way up!

This Father Morice took as the death-knell of his superb mission—and so it has proved to be! When the superior convoked him to a Council he held with his two assistants, in order to explain the situation, the veteran was as usual quite explicit and frank.

Seeing his grief: "Pray, Father, do not blame it on us," pleaded one of the assistants. "We did not know a word of that."

"Yes," he remarked rather vehemently, "but this one"—pointing his finger to the superior—"this one knew, since I wired twice to him before it was too late."

Henceforth the poor priest's fate was sealed. He was doomed never to return to his mission! The half-witted man was left in his place, until his antics caused reiterated complaints from the Indians, and

another priest had to be sent up who, with the best will in the world, caused to reappear all those reprehensible customs which had been solemnly abolished in their last stronghold in the presence of the Bishop himself!

All our missionary's labours, the constant efforts of nineteen years joined to the seven of an excellent predecessor's work, had been in vain. The Indians but yesterday so exemplary, had returned to their vomitting. Such are the mere facts. We state them without allowing ourselves the least comment.

This was only the initial trouble of a devoted priest who, even then, was already called a veteran. After this, he languished several years away from his flock who were themselves constantly praying for his return, while all his unfinished labours on their behalf went to naught. Even the very means of his past achievements, which were due to the poor natives' subscriptions and the money which had come out of the publication of one of his books, were for ever destroyed: his splendid press was irretrievably spoiled in transit and its costly material, type, even that of a Nahanais dictionary and grammar—part of which was already in the forms ready for the press\*—was sown along the Cariboo wagon road, for the lack of the most rudimentary packing. As a consequence, Father Morice's invention had practically become useless, since his type

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\* After Father Morice had already printed, in common type, for missionaries and scientists, the entire grammar of that dialect and its dictionary up to the letter *F* inclusively. All readers may not be familiar enough with printing to understand without being told that the "forms" of a press are part of a book, etc., duly set to type as the matter must be when printed, and secured between steel frames called "chases." Now these same forms ready to be used on the press and the type of which can be irretrievably spoiled by coming into contact with harder material, had not even been encased in any protective recipient—a circumstance which of itself determined the degree of sanity in the poor man who was preferred to Father Morice for the direction of his so important Mission.

having been lost, the printing of any more Indian books was now out of the question.

Even a most useful little volume of 144 pages, of which he had painfully printed with common type 100 copies for the benefit of future missionaries and others not familiar with his syllabic signs, disappeared, being probably done away with by people who did not realize its value. It is owing to the vandalism consequent on a decision which we will not judge that the Indians now clamour, seconded by their Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Emile Bunoz, after a re-printing of those books, which has become a material impossibility.

Yet these were only parts of Father Morice's trials in British Columbia. As a consequence of what we have rather hinted at than explained, came enormities over which we must throw the veil of silence. Finally, though the opposite had been expressly promised him, after attending the sessions of an international Congress of scientists in Vienna, Austria, to which he had been invited by cable, he was transferred to the Oblate "province" of Manitoba.

That was the great cross of his life. For years, so irretrievably absorbed was he in the remembrance of his former charge, the language of whom he was, and has remained ever since, the only missionary to know, that, at night at least, he seemed to linger still among them, correct the abuses that were creeping in their midst, preach to them; in a word, continue his apostolate among them.

In St. Boniface, Manitoba, he was received by a most kind and just Provincial, Rev. Father Prisque Magnan, O.M.I., who, with his immediate successor, Father Chas. Cahill, ever treated him with the consideration due to his age and past services. But even there new trials were in store for him. A fish cannot

thrive out of the water; how could Father Morice have flourished away from his beloved Indians?

He was momentarily editing the *Northwest Review* when two clergymen from northern Saskatchewan begged him to come and found a French paper in their midst. Kind Father O. Plourde, O.M.I., the genial manager of the concern which published the former newspaper, vainly tried to dissuade him from acceding to their request. One of them, he claimed, was a man who, full of good intentions, could not be expected to agree with him.

"He only just wants to keep me with his English paper," foolishly thought Father Morice, who, on the advice of his Provincial, accepted the task proffered him.

God alone knows the pains he took, the trouble he went to in order not only to establish the proposed periodical, but to put up its printing office. It was in a country place where not the least of even its accessories could be found—from the preparation of its premises to the buying of its presses and other machines, as well as the acquisition of the proper type, composing sticks, leads and other material.

The paper, *Le Patriote de l'Ouest*, for which Father Morice designed with his own hands the title which still adorns its front page, started publication on the 22nd of August, 1910. The editor had only one real printer, a Frenchman of not very accommodating disposition, whom he had brought from St. Boniface—he had no choice—and two or three boy apprentices whose work had, of course, to be considerably revised and improved upon. Indeed, it was necessary that the priest help in the type-setting as much as prepare "copy."

Nor was that all. As, apart from the typographers,

he was in himself the whole establishment, he had, in addition to his daily priestly duties, not only to compose the paper and revise its proofs, but attend to the correspondence, solicit and receive the subscriptions and orders for jobs. Then he had to enter them into the proper book, make and send out the accounts, later on, receipt and return the same, answer complaints about the non-arrival of the paper, and give all kinds of explanations. It was also necessary that he read over and correct the style of the communications for the next number, etc. Is it wonderful after that if the factotum-editor could retire only twice before midnight during a period of five weeks? This was indeed burning the midnight oil!

Everything went well for a time. The editor was praised beyond his deserts, he says, by the directors of the publishing company formed at Duck Lake. Then the head printer<sup>10</sup> thought fit to undermine his credit with that member of the directorate against whom he had vainly been cautioned, because the man found him averse to useless expense and, he claimed, too careful against the deterioration of the stock. Things went to such a pass that Father Morice deemed himself bound to resign.

Contrary to custom, in spite of the fact that every item had had to be purchased with extremely limited initial means, there was then quite a little surplus in the coffers of the journalistic concern. As the ex-editor's superior thought the paper could not survive without him, he had to stay and wait.

The founder of *Le Patriote* had, through the kindness of friends, purchases and his collaboration to scientific societies which furnished him with their yearly

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<sup>10</sup> Who had afterwards to be dismissed from one of the Winnipeg dailies.

volumes, gathered up a valuable collection of rare books on the West and anthropology, which he prized as the apple of his eyes. A few weeks after his retirement from the editorship, that library, which was still lodged in quarters above the printing office, became the prey of the flames, which originated in the negligence of the new hands.<sup>11</sup> This was on November 16, 1910. Father Morice lost everything, even the manuscript of his Carrier dictionary.

If anything could have compensated him for such a disaster, it was the universal sympathy with which it was learnt, and the generous efforts which individuals as well as institutions made to supply new copies of the volumes destroyed by fire. The official organ of the Catholic hierarchy in the West faithfully rendered the general feelings when it said:—

Rev. A. G. Morice, O.M.I., who had started the paper and directed it in such a remarkable manner until a few weeks before that disastrous fire, deplores the loss of his precious library, the only one of its kind and comprising the most complete collection of works, pamphlets and documents on the history of the Canadian West. Several of these works are no longer on the market, and were worth their weight in gold. His manuscripts also have been the prey of the flames.

We beg the learned historian to accept our most sincere sympathy in this trial of his, of which he alone can adequately measure the extent. Fire has consumed the fruit of his long years of labour, of his midnight work and of his indefatigable researches.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, the worst, because the effect of malice, was to come. Our ex-journalist, was now back in Manitoba, where he busied himself, under trying circumstances, with writing those books and essays of

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<sup>11</sup> Who refused to take the precautions with the gasoline for which they privately ridiculed Father Morice.

<sup>12</sup> *Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface*, vol. IX, p. 326, St. Boniface, 1910.

which we have already spoken. Such as may be tempted to think the following inopportune we will simply ask: Can a portrait be faithful without any shadows, a career properly presented if shown in perpetual sunshine, when it is known that darkness and gloom seriously affected it? Will one page devoted to this be found too much when it could be swollen up to a volume?

Silence and that quiet which are so essential to the success of brain work being asked for by our writer, his requests were too often blamed on neurasthenic conditions,<sup>13</sup> by people who never wrote a line for publication. This in spite of the fact that they were well aware that he was begging for nothing else than his strictest due. Nobody will ever know what he had to suffer for eight or nine years.

Things came to be much worse when the meanest of feelings, envy, became, according to others than our friend, an uncontested agent in making the latter's position practically unbearable, and succeeded in bringing the whole trouble to a climax. In view of what was to happen, we cannot forbear drawing attention to the poor little individual, an Auvergnat, afflicted with the mental jaundice as well as something like a "swelled head," who was to cause such a trial in the missionary's career that many have wondered how he could have so serenely weathered the storm.

Decency forbids us to enter into the details of the shameless abuse, crying injustice and even thefts, cleverly disguised for outsiders by unscrupulous un-

<sup>13</sup> Which, at any rate, left him well enough to write and ~~see~~ through the press, a 4-vol. work, which was afterwards praised by the Pope and crowned by the French Academy. Unusual results of neurasthenia, we should say!

truths,<sup>14</sup> which he had to endure at the hands of a man who had forced his way up by wordly intrigues, no less than by the most undisguised ambition. Neither will we enumerate the succession of unpleasantnesses due to misrepresentations which put our veteran in false positions with persons otherwise honourable, but deceived by one who could not excuse himself without accusing his victim.

Under the circumstances, some of those misunderstandings would have been as ludicrous as what was attributed to him was preposterous. But this cannot be the case when we see a venerable priest, who asks for nothing but what is strictly essential to the success of the only work assigned him by his superiors,

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<sup>14</sup> Despite our own reluctance, we are, in the interests of truth, forced to give just one example of those wilful distortions of facts, the very last one which has come to our notice. It is brazenly reported that Father Morice did not scruple to abuse poor little Father Dandurand, a venerable centenarian, whose room was above his own, for the noise he was making, and that, out of chivalrous consideration, the Auvergnat effectively stopped those complaints. In this we have lying, stealing, jealousy, ambition, disobedience, uncharitableness and acts of provocation transformed into chivalry. 1st. Father Dandurand never lived above Father Morice, and nobody knows it better than the Auvergnat; 2nd. Instead of complaining of him in the very least, our author not only loved and respected him, but went to the trouble of writing his (remarkable) Memoirs for publication, in which task our friend had all the more merit as the old man was hard to understand; 3rd. The Auvergnat's chivalry consisted in stealing, and probably destroying, the manuscript of that most interesting work, so that full justice could not be done him, or rather, as others have it, that Father Morice might not have another book to his credit; 4th. It was the Auvergnat himself who, after the Provincial had vacated his room over that of Father Morice, impudently installed himself there, as if he had been next in rank to him instead of the last but one of fourteen; 5th. In spite of the intervention of the superior, he then proceeded to make it almost impossible for our author to work.

We beg to be excused for so much detail. If we do not give at least one sample of what Father Morice has had to contend with, the fables since invented by way of excuses will become accredited, and it will be impossible to gauge the extent of the difficulties which he had to face, nor the length to which an unscrupulous intriguer can go in order to justify himself. For another of the same individual's exploits, see note 46, p. 198.

sent adrift, and all his tools, we mean his books, taken away by one who had no use for them, under the plea that "others have no such library."

The recourses to higher authorities and the persistent fights the despoiled party had to put up, in order to obtain at least partial redress, we had better leave undetailed.

To-day time seems to be, little by little, vindicating the veteran missionary in the public eye. Higher superiors in Rome have done all they could to secure the undoing of the wrongs accumulated on his devoted head. He has come back into the possession, or rather the use, of most of what envy had taken from him<sup>15</sup> and, under a separate roof graciously provided for him, he is in better condition than ever to pursue those labours without which he could not live.

That is the beginning of his reward, or at least a compensation for adversity nobly and patiently supported. We shall now see in a few pages what has been the reward for his past exertions as a missionary, a writer and a scientist.

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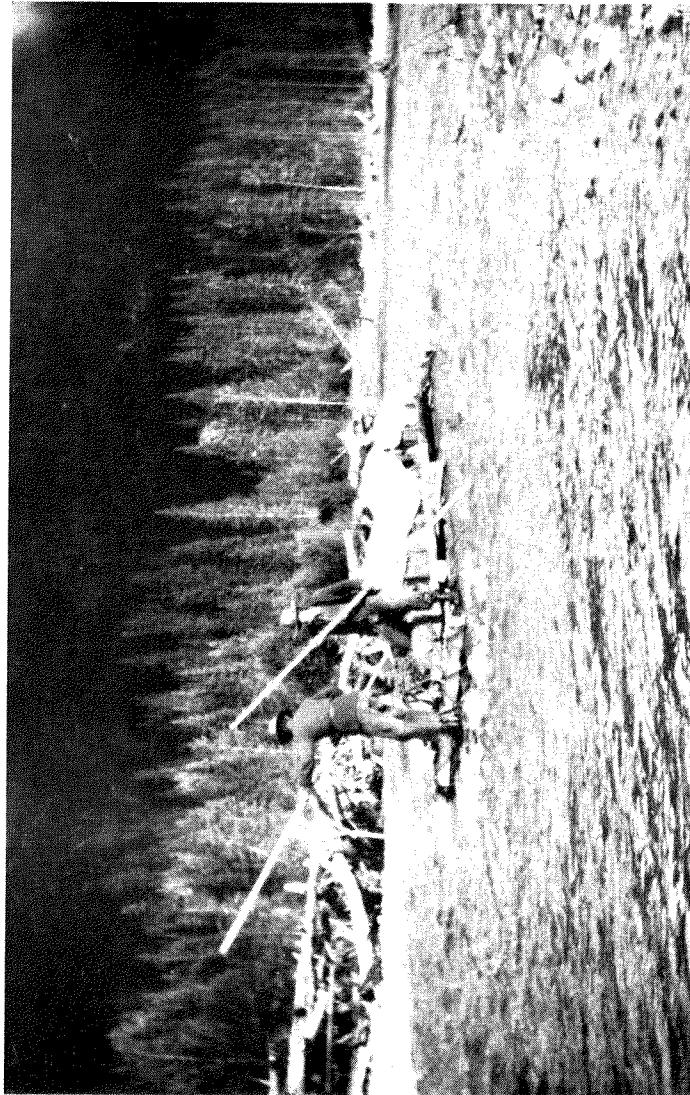
<sup>15</sup> There are now remaining to return not much more than the manuscript of one book still unpublished, 175 or 180 volumes, one of which, extremely rare, is quoted at \$62.50 in a late catalogue, two iron boxes full of most valuable historical documents and Father Morice's private papers.



# REWARD







*Photo by F. C. Scamell, L.S.*

RAFTING ON RAFT RIVER

## CHAPTER XII

### REWARD

[1900-1930]

IT GOES without saying that to a Christian, let alone a priest, the very best reward for the good done is, pending that which he expects from his heavenly Master, the pleasant feeling of duty, and perhaps a little more, accomplished. All the difficulties Father Morice ever experienced in British Columbia originated in his attempt to forestall the lamentable disaster which was to overtake his beautiful Mission. As to those which overtook him in Manitoba, they were due to a little parvenu who can offer no excuse therefor without violating the truth—unless it be contended that the veteran missionary was wrong in claiming the quiet necessary to the production of the literary work with which his superiors had entrusted him.

In either case, who will blame him? Apart from the verdict of his conscience, approval from outside disinterested parties is none the less welcome, and can always be taken for a precious encouragement. It is therefore because of our sympathy with the subject of these pages (were it only for his spirit of frankness and impartiality which makes him cry to us that he is far from perfect and does not claim the monopoly of uprightness) that we are going to point to appreciations, consigned in regular books or in letters, to be added to those already quoted, concerning his career in British Columbia.

As early as 1893, that is at a time when Father

Morice had not to his credit half of what he later realized as a missionary, Mr. Henry Somers Somerset, the son of Lady Somerset, had the following in his book, *In the Land of the Muskeg*:

. . . We told Father Morice of our difficulty, and enlisted his help, for his influence with the Indians is prodigious. Father Morice is the Catholic missionary, and we had made his acquaintance almost as soon as we arrived, and thus came in contact with one of the most remarkable men in North-Western America.

Père Morice was, of course, a Frenchman, but his English was irreproachable. It is something of a surprise to find a *savant* and a man of learning working amongst the Indians in a lonely Northern mission. But, judging by his congregation, it was evident that his talents were not thrown away. The Carrier Indians are immeasurably superior to their relations the Beavers. They build log-houses, and many speak English and read books and a monthly review in the native tongue, printed in the syllabary their priest has invented for them.

This is one of the many extraordinary achievements of this prince of missionaries, who not only is his own editor, compositor and printer, but has invented a most ingenious syllabary, which is easily learnt—so that Indians who have no idea what writing is have been known to learn to read and write this language with perfect correctness after two or three days' instruction. Of course, their manner of life is not that of the civilized man, for their employment remains unchanged, and they still hunt and fish like other Indians; but they have been given many of the advantages of civilization and none of its evils.

Père Morice himself is the greatest authority upon their history and customs, and has written much concerning them. All that I say about these people I learned from him, and much that is written here is quoted from his writings.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Chas. Hill-Tout has the missionary in view when he writes, in his preface to his book on *The Far West, the Home of the Salish and Déné*:

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<sup>1</sup> *Ubi supra*, pp. 226-28. London, 1895.

I desire here to acknowledge my indebtedness to those from whom I have drawn or received assistance in the preparation of this work. Foremost among these is my always courteous friend and fellow-student, the Reverend Father Morice, of the Oblate Mission at Stuart's Lake, British Columbia. This able and scholarly missionary has spent a large portion of his life among the Déné tribes, and is more familiar with all that appertains to their lives and customs, both past and present, than any other man living.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, Mrs. Hilda G. Howard, the true name of the author of *The Glamour of British Columbia*, answering some criticism by our friend wrote thus:

Please do not think for a moment that I would ever have either the ignorance or the impudence to set up my little superficial knowledge against your own authoritative learning on this subject. So far from doing this, I have been careful to cite you as the only authority.

In all my various travellings in Central British Columbia I have always heard yourself and the memories you have left spoken of with real affection, and shall always entertain the deepest respect for a great man and one who loves that country as I love it myself.<sup>4</sup>

While we are quoting from letters, we must be allowed to reproduce in its entirety one which was a source of great consolation to Father Morice, because, coming from such a high party as a member of the General Administration of his Order, its mention of "crosses" is an implicit admission of undeserved injustices. They would not have been crosses but just retribution if deserved. We translate as literally as possible.

I cannot allow your Jubilee festivities to pass by without offering you my congratulations and most sincere good wishes. Here is now half a century of religious life, of ser-

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<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. VII. Toronto, 1907.

<sup>4</sup> Glendale, Calif., July 27, 1926.

vice of God, of devotedness and labours for the Congregation and souls, which the Angels have surely entered in the Book of Life, and the reward of which will be one day yours.

I know that the cross of Oblation<sup>4</sup> has been for you the symbol of many crosses in the course of the fifty years that have elapsed.<sup>5</sup> But to-day I rejoice with you at the graces which God has granted you and the good which you have done.

I have always been among the admirers of your literary activity, and I pray that the Almighty may grant you many more years to attend to that apostolate, if other labours become too difficult with the weight of years.<sup>6</sup>

From a much humbler quarter, yet no less precious to the addressee because bearing exclusively on his work among the Indians, are letters from a young priest in charge of part of the territory formerly under our friend. Under date of March 23, 1929, that missionary, whom Father Morice never saw, was writing him spontaneously:

Allow me to tell you, Reverend Father, that, after having read almost all your works, I greatly admire you, especially because of your long years of apostolate in the north of British Columbia. You have achieved an admirable work among our dear Indians, and your souvenir remains imperishable among them . . . You may be sure that, in the performance of my duties, I shall remember you, who have toiled so much in the same missions and have accomplished such a gigantic task.

A little later the same was writing, in unsuspected corroboration of what we have stated relative to the destruction of Father Morice's printing office:

An Indian has lent me one of your own books, the *Carrier Prayer-Book*, and I am glad to be able to say

<sup>4</sup> The crucifix which the Oblates carry about as part of their costume.

<sup>5</sup> This was written for the fiftieth anniversary of our friend's definitive entrance into the Order.

<sup>6</sup> Rome, June 10, 1929.

that, with a little assistance, I have been able to read all the signs! What an admirable work you have done, what an immense good it has produced and does not cease to produce even at the present time! It is a pity that this book cannot be reprinted, for all the Indians would get it. . . . I cannot help feeling sad at the thought that the fruit of your great labour is going to waste.<sup>7</sup>

Such testimonies to the value of his past missionary efforts are bound to be taken as some kind of reward for our veteran's exertions. No less precious to him is the remembrance of some happenings among his former charge which, in the light of their original mentality and customs, must be viewed as something little short of heroic. When one remembers that such a change was due to the new ideas instilled by the missionary's preaching, one can understand his satisfaction at the efficacy of his action. Dr. Thomas O'Hagan refers, but too briefly,<sup>8</sup> to one such case which will gain by being related in full.

The head chief of the Carrier tribe, *Taya*, was an old man<sup>9</sup> of a rather irascible disposition, who had, in his younger days, been used to threaten, rather too often, people with his gun and knife. He was now as thoroughly Christian as he could be; but, having been converted a little late in life, some of his past characteristics had stuck to him.

It was in the beginning of September, when, getting tired of eating salmon,<sup>10</sup> he had decided to go down the Stuart River and try his luck at bear shooting, which was, at that season all the more easy as bears were wont to feed nightly on the salmon that had died on

<sup>7</sup> Somewhere in the Northern Interior, of British Columbia, 6 April, 1929.

<sup>8</sup> *Father Morice*, pp. 10-12.

<sup>9</sup> See his portrait. He had not a grey hair at eighty.

<sup>10</sup> Whose season at Stuart Lake was between Aug. 15 and Sept. 8 or later.

their way to the lake, and lay stranded along the banks of the rivers. As customary with his people, Taya came one Monday morning to bid farewell to the priest, whom he told that he intended to be at least two weeks on his outing.

Three days later, his pastor was intent on some work at the table which served him as a desk, when the door of the Indian hall where he worked was noiselessly opened by somebody who immediately squatted by. Partly to show that he was busy, and also because he knew that an Indian will not address you before some moments of silence have elapsed,<sup>11</sup> the priest delayed somewhat turning to ascertain who it was.

To his surprise, he then saw the chief, sad and dejected, and with head bent down as if the prey of some great depression.

"Well, Taya, how is that? You had told me you would be fully two weeks away," said Father Morice.

"Oh! Father, I have been unlucky," answered the chief with a sigh.

"How is that? You killed nothing?"

"Yes, I killed a man."

"What? . . . Killed a man, did you say?" repeated the priest struck with horror. "And you a communicant! . . ."

Another sigh was the reply, until the priest asked:

"And whom did you kill?"

"I don't know. It must be Joseph Prince or Jean-Baptiste *Thayelli*."

Then, with an effort to relieve his feelings, the old man explained that, on the preceding night, as he was drifting down the river with his wife in a little canoe, he had heard through the mist hanging over the water

<sup>11</sup> Conformably to native etiquette, which is very strict on that point, only brainless people being considered as ever ready to speak.

something like a squashing noise, which he thought was made by a bear eating dead salmon, and had fired at the indistinct black object from which it proceeded.

Immediately a man had sprung up crying:

"My father-in-law, what are you doing? Oh! my God! Holy water. . . ."

The stranger had then sunk in the mud, dead. The poor chief was so surprised, so astounded, that he had not had the courage to go and identify the victim of his mistake, but had immediately left to apprise his father, the priest. And, grown up with the ideas of another age as he was, and thinking that, because of his past, nobody would believe in his innocence, he now wanted to run into the woods and build a log fort to defend himself against the relatives of the man he had killed, who were, he thought, sure to come and avenge their loss on him.

"Beware of making such a blunder," strenuously cautioned the priest. "Return to your house and carefully avoid acting as if you expected an attack. I shall speak to the Indians and I feel certain that I shall succeed if you follow my advice. We are Christians now. Remember it!"

Then Father Morice sent for the body, which proved to be that of Jean-Baptiste, one of the best known men of the place, who had the largest number of grown-up sons able to avenge his death. The missionary next spoke to the Indians, and reminded them that they were the disciples of Him who pardoned His executioners on the Cross, and who said that He had shown the way to be followed by those who wanted to go to Him in heaven. He felt sure he added, "that they would follow His example, and pardon the chief

for what was, after all, an accident, not an intentional deed as was that of the Jews."

On the day of the funeral, a spectacle absolutely unheard of in the annals of the Carrier tribe was witnessed: despite the great grief which prevailed, the old chief and the widow of his victim, together with other members of the families of both, were seen kneeling at the same holy table and partaking of the same Holy Communion.

Furthermore, not a word of reproach was uttered at the grave or elsewhere. As remarks Dr. O'Hagan, "It was a marvellous example of the power of Christian faith."<sup>12</sup> May we not add: It was to the pastor of that primitive flock the very best reward he could have wished for his incessant exertions?

If of a somewhat hasty nature, the same Taya was gifted with the greatest faith in God and in the power of His minister. Once, while Morice was away,<sup>13</sup> the old man had a most serious attack of influenza. According to the customs of the ancients of his tribe, in cases of sickness, he was going about naked, save for an old blanket he carried on his shoulders, and some of his relatives remonstrated with him.

"Don't you know, grandfather," they would say, "that, according to the whites, you must, with that particular disease, be extremely careful not to catch cold; else you are sure to die?"

At which Taya, looking up at them, would say in a kind of pitying way.

"Tut! Tut! Tut! The whites! The whites! They

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<sup>12</sup> *Father Morice*, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Ministering to a population among which only four men were up, all the others, as well as the women, and soon himself, being stricken by disease, so that the priest, who had come to that village much against the warnings of his friends, had to be dragged along to help the dying.



*Photo by Father Morice*

CHIEF TAYA



don't know what they say. They ignore the fact that Father Morice is praying for me!"

Taya got over it, but after his protector's removal from Stuart Lake, he succumbed to the first attack of an insignificant complaint.

It would be a waste of time, after the many proofs which can be found in the course of this work, to insist on the extraordinary regard in which Father Morice was held by all his dusky children. We cannot, however, resist the temptation of showing that this regard did not weaken with years. Love calls for love, and because his people felt how much he cared for them, they could not help loving him. We remember that an American authoress found among them the marks of the "real affection" they still entertained for him, an affection which was all the more genuine as it was absolutely disinterested. This recalls the many evidences of such feelings given by people of another tribe, the Babines, to whom he had felt it his duty to show so little tenderness because of the potlatch.

"See how my eyes are red and my face emaciated," said one of their men to him on his return among them after a long absence. "My eyes got red through weeping after you, my face thinned out, because I lost appetite and could not eat after you had left us."<sup>14</sup>

Shall we count for nothing the undying devotion of his companions and guides in his laborious explorations? They were well aware that those outings not being for religious purposes, they were free to refuse being parties to them. Some of the traders did not scruple to assert that the amateur explorer was working for the Government, who would richly remunerate him

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Au Pays de l'Ours Noir*, p. 166.

for his trouble, an insinuation the real import of which was obvious and perfectly understood by the Indians.

Did they, on that account, refuse to oblige him, or demand payment for their services? Not in the least. They continued to the end to help him gratuitously, in labours which they realized were supernumerary. Yet there is something still more striking, because attributable not to a few select individuals, but to a crowd of unchosen people, and because it happened long after their pastor had been obliged to leave them.

In the spring of 1919, sixteen years since he had parted with them, the veteran missionary thought of visiting his former central mission and such of its outposts as lay on the way thither, in the interests of his *magnum opus*, his Grammar-Dictionary of their language. Because he was not sure of the actual location of the railway line built after his stay in the North, he had not apprized the natives of Stony Creek of his intentions for, he thought, they were likely to live far away. Once back in the outskirts of his former district, he had just passed by, late in the evening, in a train that was three hours behind time, what is now called Prince George (the Fort George of the olden days), and he was still nursing the grief due to his parting with his beloved children, when he was suddenly awakened from his reverie by a big hand extended to him by a tall man in uniform, the new conductor, who cried out:

“How are you, Father Morice?”

Not a little surprised, the priest looked up:

“Excuse me, Sir,” he said; “I have not the honour of knowing you, and am afraid you make a mistake. I cannot see how you can know me.”

“Know you! Good heavens! Who is he who does not know the great pioneer of these parts?” replied

the big man. "We are all familiar with your wonderful work among the Indians of the whole district and of Prince George in particular. Besides, I am a friend of Bishop Bunoz, and do you think he could help speaking of you?"

"Yes, but how do you know that I am the great man you are pleased to describe so well?" asked Father Morice, now somewhat cheered up by the conductor's extraordinary fervour (he was an ex-clergyman, and must have been a good preacher).

"Oh! yes, I forgot to tell you that in town we all knew you were among the Indians of Shelley.<sup>15</sup> The people of Prince George were eagerly awaiting the opportunity of seeing you. They will feel much disappointed that you did not stop off among them between two trains."

Thus went on the big man, questioning the missionary, whose book on the Northern Interior he had read, on his former adventures, and he was so interested that he apparently forgot to ask for his ticket and give the usual check in return therefor.

Meanwhile, after his departure for his own quarters in the train, Father Morice was attentively scrutinizing through the car window the environs of the track. Occasionally he felt delighted at recognizing here and there bits of the old trail he had so often followed, or creeks which recalled to his mind accidents or incidents the remembrance of which was "renewing his youth." Musing on old times, while the few passengers in his car were sleeping, was an immense satisfaction to the veteran missionary.

Having received no check from the enthusiastic conductor, however, who very likely thought him fast

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<sup>15</sup> Where he had stayed two days among the former Fort George Indians, now transplanted there.

asleep by his window, he could not be told to get off when Vanderhoof, the station for Stuart Lake Mission, was reached.

The train had already been a few minutes at a standstill when, looking out, the traveller realized that he had unawares reached a place which seemed more than a common village. Might not that be Vanderhoof?

"I will go and see," he thought.

As he was making for the door of the car, he saw through its pane two big Indian faces looking in, one of whom exultantly cried out:

*"En e'tén, that's he!"*

Two of his former Indians waiting for him at a quarter past three in the morning! Was not that sweet? That was not all. On emerging from the train, he went past the big conductor, all aglow at the spectacle that was under his eyes: Practically the whole native population of Stony Creek, nine miles off, which, though never officially advised of his coming, was there. Young and old, men and women, eager to see him once more before he branched off for Stuart Lake Mission, his destination.

As usual, a speech was made, or rather started, in the kind of painfully broken English the Indians now used with priests and whites.

"What are you jabbering about? I don't understand a word of what you say," interrupted the missionary in excellent Carrier. "Speak your own language and I will understand you."

Oh! the expressive cast of the faces all round! Amazement, deep contentment, and something like subdued hilarity at the uselessness of the chief's painstaking attempt, were the evident feelings betrayed by the various physiognomies in the crowd.

The old women were shaking up the upturned palms of their wrinkled hands, singing out at the same time:

“Ooh! ooh! He still knows our language! Ooh! ooh! How delightful it is!”

“That is indeed a grand reception,” shouted behind an English voice.

It was Mr. Conductor, who had left all the while his train at a standstill, lost as he seemed to be in bewilderment!

At Stuart Lake the visitor was received with the ringing of the church bells, as if he had been a Bishop, the crackling of the rifles and the noisy acclamations of the people, among whom he was sorry to miss very many who had, the previous year, been carried off by what was called the “flu,” in reality the black pest formerly so common after great wars.

During the fourteen days of his stay on behalf of his linguistic work, he received with the many protestations of unending attachment of a population which vainly asked him to remain at his old post, most generous offerings which, added to what he got in three other places, much more than covered his travelling expenses. Yet most whites still imagine that the Indian does not know what we call gratitude!

He does; in the same way as he can appreciate an honour paid his spiritual guide, such as, for instance, that which was done Father Morice, when, by a special “indult” from the Pope, he was empowered to give confirmation during 1892.

That is not the only privilege which was conferred on him by that highest of parties. His superior had, in these latter years, condescended to allow him to live in a separate house kept by an excellent English family. This meant, of course, the daily celebration of Mass either at home or in a neighbouring church or

chapel. As this last alternative was not practicable, his new Provincial, the Rev. Josaphat Magnan, remarked that, he surely had worked enough in his past life to become the recipient of some favour at the hands of the Holy See, and he kindly obtained for him the quite unusual privilege of saying Mass under his own roof.

A further recognition of his past services in the missionary field, to which Father Morice has been no less sensible, came from outsiders. It was none other than his selection by the Ryerson Publishing house to represent, along with the late Father Lacombe, the Catholic missionaries of the West in its series of little Canadian History Readers. It was an honour which, of course, came to him quite unexpectedly, inasmuch as he was the only subject thus treated during his lifetime.

No wonder, then, if last year, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his entrance into the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, an anniversary which he tried to keep as secret, and its festivities as private, as possible, he "received numerous congratulatory letters (one of which was from a Bishop), visits, and telephonic messages, without counting several telegrams and even a cable from Europe."<sup>16</sup>

We have, in that connection, quoted the telling letter of an Assistant General. From another such dignitary, the very first after the General, came also letters from which we can cull the following all the more significant declarations, as he had had to deal with our friend's troubles:

In the name of the Congregation I congratulate you, and would do so in that of the Church (if I was qualified therefor), on the good you have done through your historical writings. God has caused to be produced by that

<sup>16</sup> *La Liberté*, Oct. 16, 1929.

"insupportable" Père Morice, along with others, a work for which I never cease to thank Him, the *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*. To thus labour for the Church and the Congregation, you must have felt much love for both."<sup>17</sup>

This refers mostly to the veteran considered as writer. In the same connection, we must not forget to mention a distinction from a non-Catholic source of which Father Morice has always professed to be exceptionally proud. In 1911, he became the first Bachelor of Arts, and the following year the first Master of Arts, of the University of Saskatchewan, one of his books being in each case taken as his particular thesis therefor and critically examined accordingly. As he pleasantly remarks: "These are honours which I can share with nobody, as there is only one first graduate in either rank."

A scarcely smaller reward for past efforts of a literary nature, though it lacks the note of exclusiveness of the foregoing, is the fact that his greatest work, his 4-vol. French *Histoire de l'Eglise catholique dans l'Ouest canadien*, was crowned by the French Academy. This is a distinction which we are afraid will not be appreciated at its just value by the English reader, who cannot be expected to realize the magnitude of the honour thus conferred on an author by a body the pre-eminence of which is known only to Frenchmen.

On October 23, 1925, Bishop Baudrillart, himself a member of that unique body, was writing its author:

As the Thérouane prize was shared by a fairly large number of candidates, we could not give you a reward worthy of your book; and the mention had been entered in the register: "reserved for a more important reward." It was decided yesterday that you would have the two thousand franc prize called the Academy Prize, and, though

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<sup>17</sup> Rev. S. Dozois, Rome, 17 Nov., 1925.

the awards have to be proclaimed only in the public session of the first Thursday in December, you are henceforth authorized to add to the title of your work: "Crowned by the French Academy."

In France this mere mention often suffices to ensure the success of a book.

If considered from a scientific standpoint, we may remark that the excellence of Father Morice's work has no less been recognized. To say that he to-day belongs to no fewer than thirteen scientific societies is not adequate to show the recognition it has received. A person who has, however so little, dabbled in a particular science, or merely feels some special interest in it, can usually become a member of a society that studies it, by the mere annual payment of a fee. All the bodies to which our scientist belongs—and these are not only Canadian, but American, English, French and Swiss—have admitted him gratuitously, on the strength of his reputation and in view of some future collaboration.

He has been solicited by various other societies to affiliate himself with them, but has never heeded such an invitation when a monetary remittance was mentioned, because he considers that a paid honour is no honour at all. Even the mere circumstance of having to stand candidate therefor, though there may be no admission or yearly fee, has always been enough to deter him from having anything to do with a society that is thus entered. This explains why he is not a member of the Royal Society of Canada. Urgently pressed three different times—the first, in 1896, by no less a personage than the late Dr. G. M. Dawson—to allow his name to be presented as that of a party soliciting admission into that body, he firmly refused,

the second time at the risk of displeasing his great friend, the Most Rev. Archbishop Langevin.

When the honour comes unbidden and unpaid for, he has always felt grateful toward those who conferred it. This happened, for instance, in the case of the Canadian Institute, of Toronto. When that body received the title of "Royal," it was empowered to create honorary members, and by the unanimous vote of the Council of the Institute, our scientist was the very first to be elected to that position.

So was it with his geographical achievements. When he published his map of the Nechaco Valley and his account of its exploration, as well as of the discovery of its sources, he was awarded a silver medal by the Geographical Society of Paris. This distinction was all the more appreciated as the author of both had not even sent a copy of either (which had been published by a Swiss society) to the Paris corporation.

Other marks of public esteem and appreciation, which Father Morice rightly took as rewards for past achievements, may also be seen in the circumstance that he is quoted or referred to no less than fifteen times in a single article<sup>18</sup> of that greatest of English works of reference, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; also in the fact that the Canadian National Railway gave his name to one of its stations, and in the no less significant donation of \$500.00 by the British Columbia Government, as a free contribution towards the printing of his greatest philological work, *The Carrier Language*.

Since we have come down to the question of marks of appreciation by individuals or public bodies, we may perhaps be permitted to mention the numerous gifts

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<sup>18</sup> *American Ethnology*.

from authors, autographed volumes, which adorn his library, some of which he prizes more than we can say because of the kind words inscribed thereon by the donors. We will single out but two of these for special mention, because both of them are due to Provincial Librarians, therefore official parties. He has two volumes printed at Victoria, donated by Mr. John Hosie, who sent them "as a small recognition of Father Morice's great services in historical matters in this province," and one written by Mr. W. J. Healy, of Winnipeg, with the following autograph: "Father Morice, whose name will always hold an honoured place in Canada's history, has done me the great honour of asking me to write my name here."

All of which is here reproduced not in a spirit of childish vainglory, but to show that, even here below, recognition of merit and return for labour by those who are something, can console for the slights and attempts at depreciation of those who are nothing. Our friend assures us that he never worked with a view to winning the plaudits of the world, but out of a sense, if not exactly of duty (since he tackled many subjects which he was not forced to touch), but because he deemed it expedient, if not imperative, to employ his time the best he knew how. Nobody will say that he has not succeeded.

Lastly, he is proud to say that even the injustices to which he was submitted won him a host of tried friends among his own confrères. It is a law of nature that a reaction of some kind should inevitably follow undeserved ill-treatment, and, if he were open to boasting, he could point to this or that community of the Oblates who literally lionized him, as a deliberate protest (that is the word one of them used) against past abuses.

And now, after a long day well spent in the interests of souls, of letters and of science, Father Morice passes its evening in the capital of Western Canada,<sup>19</sup> and he is happy, because . . . he can still work.

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<sup>19</sup> At 200 Austin Street, Winnipeg, Man.













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MORICE A G ADRIEN GABRIEL  
1859-1938

FIFTY YEARS IN WESTERN CANADA  
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